

THE WAR
IN
ABYSSINIA

THE WAR IN ABYSSINIA

A BRIEF MILITARY HISTORY

By
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FOREWORD

A brief account of the war in East Africa will be welcomed by many people in this country. Fought in mountainous, roadless regions the geography of which was quite unknown to the majority of readers, it was difficult to follow the various phases of the campaign.

The reports published in the daily press were necessarily fragmentary, hurried, and subject to some repetition. They reflected the manifold difficulties encountered by war correspondents in so vast a territory, unprovided with means of rapid communication with the outer world.

A comprehensive survey of the military events from month to month, in the several sectors of the theatre of war, accompanied by such comments and information as may be necessary for a clear understanding of the operations, should therefore prove of interest.

The part played by the Italian Air Force during the campaign is described from the point of view of its co-operation with the Army, but the developments of the use of aircraft in war were so many and so novel that it was impossible to deal adequately with their more technical aspects. It is therefore proposed to publish a short history of the work of the Air Force.

INTRODUCTION

For the better understanding of the history of the Italian war against Abyssinia, some general observations and explanations may be of value.

The main Italian attack took place on the northern frontier; here, except for the sandy plain on the sea coast which widens out into the Dankalia desert, the country is about 6,000 feet above sea-level, with mountains and passes running up to 8,000 and 10,000 feet in height. The only means of communication were tracks, in many places so narrow and precipitous that even pack animals found them difficult to negotiate. The speed of the advance therefore depended on the pace at which roads could be built, a work carried out almost entirely by the Army itself and by workmen brought from Italy.

Everything needed for the campaign had to be brought by sea, including the lorries, camels, mules, donkeys for transport, and all food for the troops as it was not possible to buy anything, except a few cattle, in the country itself. The Italians had in fact on some occasions to feed the native population, whose small stores of grain had been requisitioned by the Abyssinian forces.

General Graziani's operations on the southern Somaliland frontier were hampered both by the exceptionally bad weather and by the difficulty of

supplies as he was almost entirely dependent on the open roadstead of Mogadishu.

The Italian forces in East Africa consisted of :—

(1) Divisions of the regular Army, with Artillery, Engineers, Army Service Corps, Army Medical Corps, and details of other technical units.

(2) Blackshirt Divisions. These were entirely composed of volunteers and, except for General Diamanti's Brigade, were recruited on a territorial basis. They are organized on the model of the Roman Army, the regiments being known as 'Legions'.

(3) Native Infantry, Cavalry, and Artillery, all volunteers, most of them of the regular colonial forces, though there had been a rush to join the colours as soon as war appeared likely. The forces raised in Eritrea (northern front) are known as Askari, in Somalia as 'Dubats'. They are officered throughout by Italians.

(4) The 'Bands'. These are companies of native irregulars and employed in scouting.

(5) A Division of native volunteers from the Italian Colony of Libya.

(6) Scouting and bombing squadrons of the Air Force.

There were about a quarter of a million men in the field.

Some criticisms appeared in the English press to the effect that the Italians made the roads and left their native troops to do the fighting. These criticisms showed an ignorance both of local conditions and of the psychology of both races. The Italians are

universally admitted to be the finest road makers in the world, whereas the Eritreans, as has been said, are totally useless for this work. The Askari regard fighting as the only occupation worthy of a man, and if their casualties were heavy, it was because they are almost impossible to 'hold' in action. The percentage casualties among Italian officers in the native regiments was high because it is their tradition always to lead their men. The Askari can march farther and faster than white troops and need no transport, consequently they were employed in operations where speed was necessary. The march to Gondar and the final advance to Addis Ababa were, however, both carried out by mechanized columns of white troops and were feats of endurance seldom equalled in colonial warfare. In the great battles of March and April the brunt of the heavy fighting also fell on the white troops, who showed a dash and courage which Marshal Badoglio found it difficult to praise sufficiently. The Italians are extremely proud of the devotion and fighting qualities of their native troops, and gave them perhaps undue prominence in their communiqués.

The Abyssinian forces consisted of:—

- (1) The Imperial Guard, trained and armed by Europeans. This force did not come into action till the battle at Dessiè in March, 1936.
- (2) The feudal levies of the great rases.
- (3) The irregular forces of the chiefs.

It was impossible to estimate the numbers in the field at any given time. The Emperor was reported to

have called up over a million men. They were better armed than had been expected, possessing machine and anti-aircraft guns, a large supply of modern rifles and ammunition. Owing to dissensions between races, chiefs and tribes, and the hatred in many districts for the Emperor and his representatives, the loyalty of the heterogeneous forces was doubtful.

An explanation of the Abyssinian words which occur so frequently in the names of places may be of interest—Amba (plural Ambe) means a mountain with a flat summit; Mai, water—i.e. a river or a spring; Enda, a church; Adi, a village or district.

Chapter One

THE PLAN OF CAMPAIGN AND THE FIRST ADVANCE

On the night of the 2nd to the 3rd October, 1935, the High Command in Eritrea received orders to begin operations in accordance with a plan previously agreed upon. This roughly consisted in a rapid advance to the very strong Adigrat-Enticho-Adowa line, to be made by three columns, each consisting of one army corps, commanded respectively by Generals Santini (First Army Corps—left column), Pirzio-Biroli (Native Army Corps—centre column), Maravigna (Second Army Corps—right column). They were to move forward from the line of the old frontier across the River Mareb, their respective objectives being: Adigrat, Enticho, Adowa.

It will be readily understood that, for historic reasons, the main objective was bound to be Adowa—the scene of a glorious failure, which had been a bitter memory for the Italian nation for nearly forty years. So as not to betray their intentions prematurely to the Abyssinians, the Maravigna column encamped until Sept. 30th two days' march north of the Mareb.

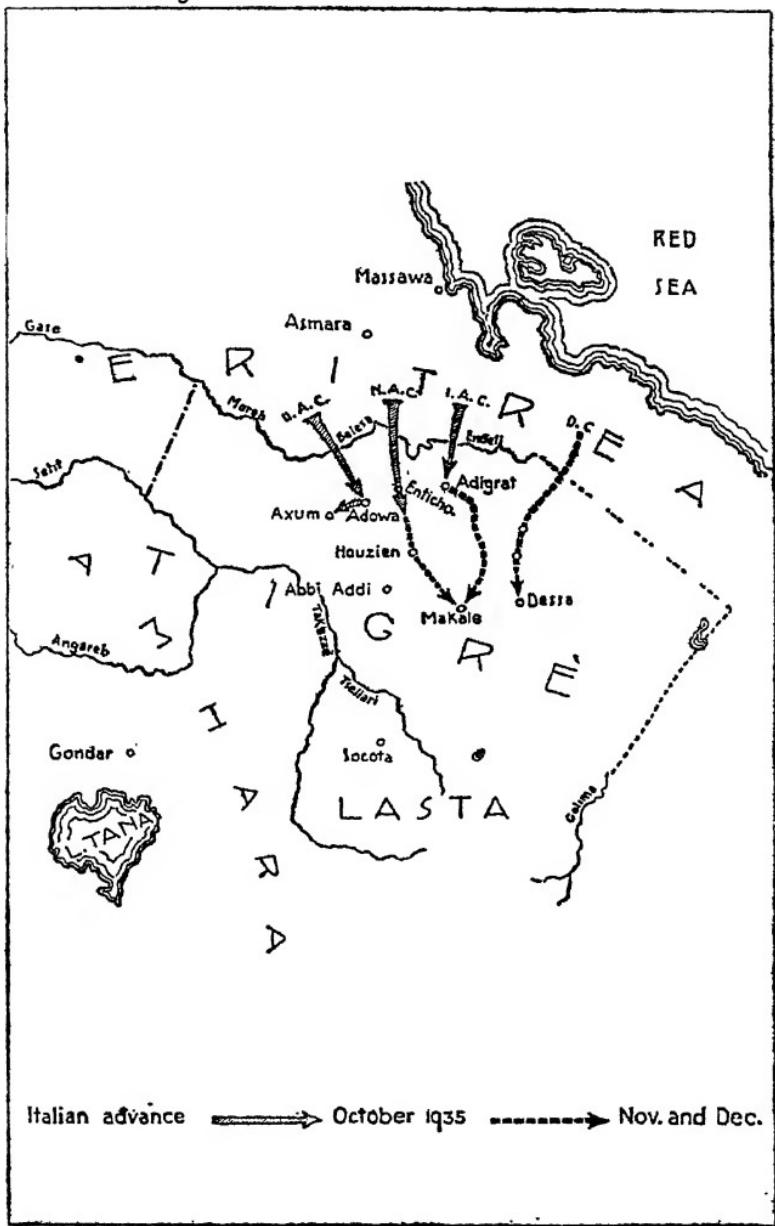
To judge by subsequent events, the Abyssinians, while taking care not to leave the Mareb front commanding the direct road to Adowa unprotected, apparently must have assumed that the advance on the town would be made by the central column

along the same road as in 1896, i.e. Enticho-Pass Rebbi-Aryenni-Vallone di Mariam Shoaitu. This miscalculation facilitated the task of the Maravigna column, although it met with the stiffest resistance.

The central column, consisting entirely of native troops, with one division of Blackshirts in the second line, was also entrusted with a very important task. Thanks to its special organization, this column was the most lightly equipped, most mobile, and most independent. It was therefore able also to co-operate promptly either in the right or left sector, operating on the flank or rear of any Abyssinian forces which might oppose the advance of the lateral columns. Other large units at the disposal of the High Command enabled it to reinforce the columns in the event of these meeting with serious resistance. This was a flexible plan of operations; it allowed of manœuvre in all directions and rapid concentration, in case the Abyssinians—following their traditional custom—were to appear suddenly in a numerically formidable mass. The extensive, timely and daring use of aircraft was designed to obviate all risk of surprise. The organization of the supply services, which enabled them to work steadily and efficiently throughout all phases of the operations, is dealt with separately.

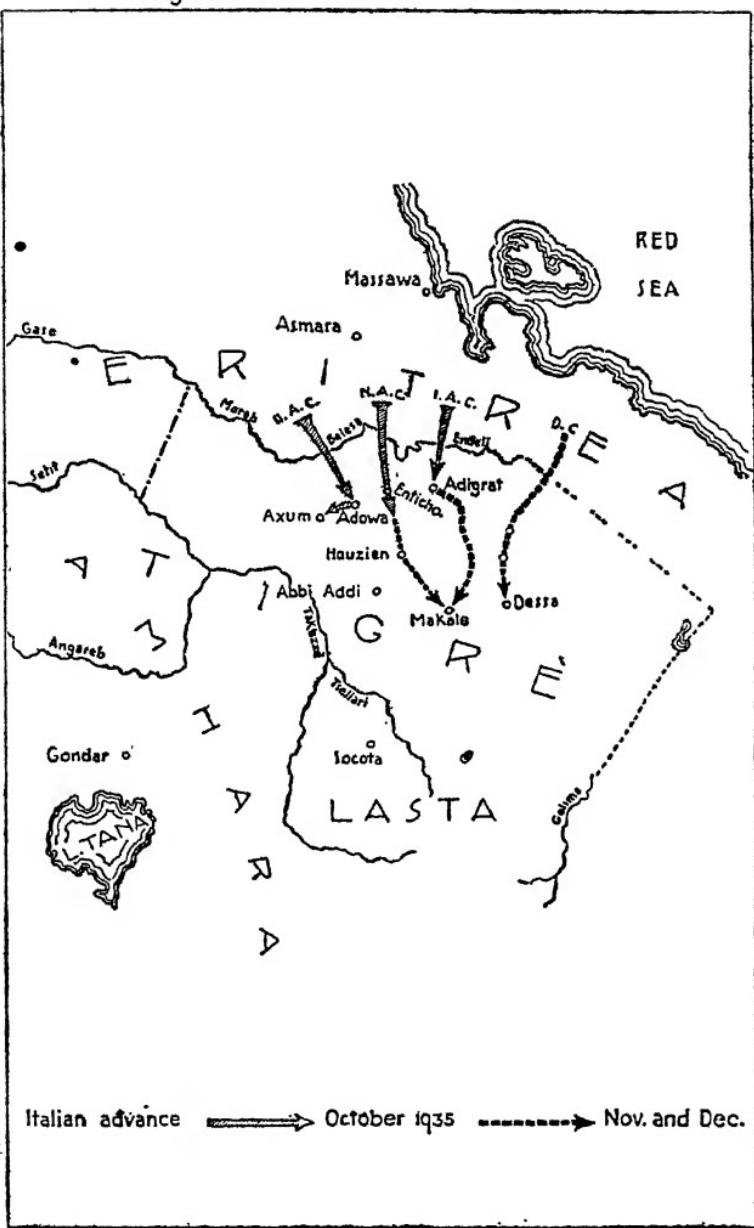
The advance was carried out according to plan. The Santini column did not meet with any resistance; the Prizio-Biroli column only at the eleventh hour, on the Amba Augher, whereas the Maravigna column had some stiff fighting. The movements of

Map of the advances to :-
Adigrat Enticho Adowa Makale



Italian advance → October 1935 -----> Nov. and Dec.

Map of the advances to :-
Adigrat Enticho Adowa Makale



these three Army Corps must be described separately.

The Santini Column.—On the night of the 2nd to the 3rd October this column arranged its order of march and advanced along the banks of the Shimezana, behind the passes of Monoxeito, Guna Guna, and Enda Gaber Kokobai.

General Santini was treading familiar ground, for as a subaltern in the 21st Cacciatori d'Africa, he had arrived in Adigrat in 1896.

At 5 a.m., on Oct. 3rd, the entire Army Corps crossed the frontier, flanked on the extreme left by the Shimezana Bands; on the left, the 114th Legion of the Blackshirts, '28th October' Division, with sections of machine guns, and supply services; in the centre, the 180th and 116th Legions, with batteries of Artillery, Engineers, and Army Medical Corps; on the right the entire 'Sabauda' Division, and with it the Headquarters of the Army Corps. The advanced guard consisted of the X and XXV Native battalions.

On the same day the left column moved from Monoxeito to the Mekaten Pass, the most exposed and precipitous tract of which they crossed, carrying on their backs the loads that even their mules were unable to carry. This however, did not slow down their progress. Similar difficulties were met with on the Ona Amber Pass, not till 9 p.m., after sixteen hours' uninterrupted marching, did the column reach their objective, Addi Quola Kulu. The advance was resumed on the morning of Oct. 4th.

At 9 a.m. the advanced guard of the left column reached the village of Megheb, where the central

column was due to arrive at the same hour. But the extremely difficult passage of the gorge at Point 2435 had retarded its progress, especially that of the mountain artillery, so that the head of the column did not reach Megheb till noon.

The march of the central column, beset with like difficulties in the Mai Tobokto Pass, had been held up in the very narrow Magdille Gorge, nevertheless by 6 p.m. the central column reached Leguda, the objective for Oct. 4th.

The 'Sabauda' Division, in spite of its being more heavily equipped owing to its composition, and beset by continuous difficulties caused by the nature of the ground, completed its march up to time. It also succeeded in the very difficult task of establishing contact with the Native Army Corps operating in the direction of Enticho.

Thus the entire Santini Army Corps had reached the northern edge of the Adigrat basin, while the advanced guard of its left column, after occupying Megheb, immediately pushed on without meeting any resistance.

The first phase of the advance on Adigrat ended without encountering any difficulties except those of the terrain. The inhabitants of the groups of huts which cling to the mountain sides around the ubiquitous Coptic churches, came down silent and frightened behind their priests. The Chief of Megheb with the priests and the elders paid their homage to General Somma, commanding the '28th October' Division.

As soon as contact had been established between

the various columns, the Army Corps General Headquarters from the Kerseber observatory ordered the Blackshirt Division, which had barely had time to eat its rations, to move on Adigrat. The march began at 2.10 p.m. The aircraft, which had previously observed the presence of considerable Abyssinian forces to the rear of the position to be occupied, reported subsequently that the enemy had retired precipitately after aerial bombardment carried out on the morning of Oct. 3rd.

The patrols of the 114th Legion were the first to reach the town of Adigrat; they were immediately followed by General Somma and his Staff.

A little later, the first Italian officers arrived at the historic fort, where, for over two months—from the beginning of March to the May 18th, 1896—the heroic Major Prestinari, with 1,300 men and a number of survivors from Adowa, had held out against Ras Mangasha's elated hordes. Adigrat had been evacuated in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of 1896 and by a strange turn of the wheel of fortune, General Santini rehoisted the Italian flag which as a subaltern he had lowered almost 40 years before.

Pirzio-Biroli's Column.—This column also, after crossing the old frontier in the dawn of Oct. 3rd, at first met with very little resistance. When it arrived in the neighbourhood of the Amba Augher, east of Enticho, information was received that this was being defended by some 500 men, commanded by the Dejiak Gebriet. The conformation of this enormous amba and the numerous caves that open on to its rear, rendered it difficult for air observers to

ascertain exactly the proportions of the defence, and attack from the air impracticable. Flying low, the aircraft opened machine gun fire on the enemy who still remained in the open.

It was decided to attack the amba simultaneously from all sides. The IV Native Brigade was to advance on Mount Kissat Atro and Amba Urara so as to encircle Point 2929 of the Amba Augher, while the II Brigade co-operating to the east by Amba Manatu was to seize Point 2917. At 10.30 a.m., the IV Native Brigade occupied Mai Daro (Point 2248), and at the same time engaged the Abyssinian forces in the rear of Amba Augher. The advance proceeded slowly, not only for tactical reasons—scouting and keeping in touch with units on either flank—but also on account of the difficulties of the ground. With the co-operation of the IV Brigade to the north and west and of the II Brigade to the east, the circle gradually closed in, and at about 4 p.m. the summit of the amba was captured.

The XVII battalion (IV Brigade) was the first to reach Point 2929, where the convent stands, and the XIX battalion (II Brigade) the eastern Point 2917. The Abyssinian forces, which were meanwhile scaling the amba from the rear, were surprised and retired in disorder.

The combined attack of the two Brigades, together with the co-operation of aircraft which raked the summit and the rear of the amba with machine gun fire while the columns were climbing its sides, explain the rapidity with which the position was captured.

Failing such co-ordination the attacking force would have been held up for several days and would have needed reinforcements, owing to the great difficulties of the ground.

The Italian losses were very small: two officers and ten Askari slightly wounded. Abyssinian losses (Ambo Augher zone): 10 killed, 59 prisoners, of whom one was wounded; and over 100 rifles captured.

The Maravigna Column.—This was entrusted with what was perhaps one of the most arduous, and was certainly one of the most coveted tasks—the advance on Adowa. It was expected that this town would be defended by considerable forces, as the Abyssinian Command would take it for granted that, for historical and other reasons, Adowa would be one of the first objectives. Apart from the probability, or indeed the certainty, that the Abyssinians would make a stubborn defence, this operation was fraught with special difficulties for the Italian troops. There were no roads except barely marked paths; vast tracts of country had to be traversed; the ground was thickly wooded and broken by deep ravines across the line of advance; and the organization of the supply services was rendered difficult by the large number of men engaged (about 14,000 Italians and 8,000 natives).

The column consisted of the Gavinana Division (General Villa Santa) and the III Native Brigade (General Cubeddu) in the front line, and the '21st April' Blackshirt Division in the 2nd line. At 5 a.m. on Oct. 3rd, they began to cross the Mareb on a wooden bridge, which had been thrown across during

the night by the Engineers. The first to cross were the Serae Band (commanded by Lieut. Morgantini) and the 'Duca degli Abruzzi' Detachment of Light Tanks. They were followed by the advanced guard of the Gavinana Division, the I battalion of the 84th Infantry Regiment, and two batteries of the 19th Artillery Regiment.

Owing to the nature of the ground beyond the Mareb which is densely wooded, the advance of the main body of the Division, which at first it had been intended to divide into two columns, was effected in a single column. By 3 p.m. the whole Gavinana Division had reached the further bank of the Mareb, its crossing being covered by batteries of artillery in position in the Kessad Eca zone.

The first contact with small forces of Abyssinians, two to three hundred strong, occurred at Rama. They were quickly dispersed, leaving one dead and one wounded on the ground. Meanwhile the III Native Brigade arrived at the Mareb, which they crossed before darkness fell.

At 3 p.m., in the vicinity of the little Daro Tacè fort, the Serae Band had a skirmish with an Abyssinian force, some 100 strong, which attacked it violently. The Band stood its ground, but the commanding officer, Lieut. Morgantini, being severely wounded, it withdrew with a loss of 16 dead, 15 wounded, and 16 missing.

Lieut. Morgantini, though dying, continued to encourage his men, saying to them: 'Don't trouble about me, carry on.' The Silver Medal for Military Valour was awarded to him posthumously.

The advanced guard of the 'Gavinana', having reached the Mai Enda Baria junction, prevented any advance of the Abyssinians, and to cover the flanks of the entire column the XVIII Native battalion were despatched to the right and the XXIII to the left, both having crossed the Mareb at 5 a.m. Owing to the difficulties of the route (several mules had fallen into a ravine), the progress of the former had been slower, but by the evening they reached their objective—Kessad Allà—which was held so as to counter any attack from Axum. The XXIII Native battalion met with some resistance from a force of about 300 between Tebai and Enda Johannes, and passed the night there. They lost three Askari killed and one wounded.

On the evening of Oct. 3rd, the main column halted a little south of Mai Enda Baria, according to plan. The night of the 3rd-4th passed quietly, except for a few shots fired into the camp of the advanced guard by which two men of the 70th Infantry were killed.

During the night, the III Native battalion was despatched to relieve the Serae Band. Marching fast they pushed ahead of the column and at dawn encountered Abyssinian patrols. A few hours later they attacked the little fort of Daro Taclè, which was evacuated by the enemy at 5 p.m. The Italian losses amounted to 1 2nd lieutenant wounded, 4 Askari killed, 8 wounded. The Abyssinian losses were considerable and are believed to have included Fitaurari Kassai. The advance, in two columns, of the Gavinana Division continued throughout the day.

The left column—83rd and 84th Infantry with the Brigade Command and two batteries of artillery—reached Mai Cho; the right—70th Infantry and III Native Brigade—remained at Kessad Allà, where they had arrived the previous evening. On the left, the XXIII Native Brigade continued to meet with stubborn resistance and lost 5 Askari killed and 2 missing.

The general advance was resumed at dawn on the 5th and proceeded almost undisturbed as far as the neighbourhood of the Gashorki Pass, where the Native Brigade had a sharp encounter with the enemy. The 70th Infantry Regiment was despatched as a reinforcement and after a brief action, with some bombardment by mountain batteries and aircraft, the Abyssinians retired on Amba Sebhat (Point 2510). The same afternoon a considerable force of the enemy put up a spirited fight at Mai Turkuz, but they were dislodged by the prompt action of one of the Italian batteries.

By the evening, the advanced guard of the right column—II battalion 84th Infantry—reached the point where the Italian Consulate stands, at less than one hour's distance from Adowa. The right column pursued its task of flanking and keeping a watch for any hostile forces coming from Axum, and passed the night in the positions gained in the vicinity of Amba Sellat.

At dawn on the 6th, the commander of the Army Corps, considering his objective to be definitely attained, ordered the Gavinana Division to concentrate at the junction of the tracks at Adi Abuna and there

await the III Native Brigade, which was to debouch from the Gashorki Pass. Both units were then to advance, keeping in touch, and to deploy on the Enda Ghiorghis-Enda Micael front, i.e. on the north and north-east sides of the Adowa basin. This movement was successfully carried out, though disturbed by Abyssinian forces moving towards Debra Sînà, whence they tried again and again to arrest the advance of the 70th Infantry. The prompt assistance of batteries of the 19th Artillery, however, checked these attempts and compelled the Abyssinians to withdraw with considerable losses.

On the 6th at 10.30 a.m. the II battalion of the 84th Infantry entered the city of Adowa with colours flying. The heroic 6,000 officers and men who fell in the battle of 1896 were at last avenged. The battalion did not remain inside the town, but left it at once to occupy the heights to the south. The XXIII Native battalion which was advancing by the Valley of Mariam Shoaitu to the point where the Da Bormida Brigade had been wiped out in 1896, met with considerable resistance, particularly on the Amba Sebhat. On the morning of the 8th the 70th Infantry Regiment with batteries of artillery was accordingly despatched to attack the enemy position of Amba Sebhat from the rear. But as soon as the Abyssinians perceived this encircling movement they hastily withdrew, and at 6 p.m. the XXIII battalion was able to advance without molestation. Abyssinian losses in this sector were considerable, over 100 being killed and wounded.

Meanwhile, in execution of orders given on the

field on the 6th, the deployment of Italian forces on the heights commanding the Adowa basin was completed on the 7th and 8th as follows—the 84th Infantry on the southern slopes of the Sùllodà; the 83rd Infantry in the Enda Ghiorghis-Fremona zone; the 70th Infantry in reserve between the Italian Consulate and the junction of the tracks at Adi Abuna; the 519th machine gun battalion at Amba Eulal close to the approaches to the Mariam Shoaitu Valley; a company of the XXIII Native battalion on the Sullodà; all the artillery in position at Amba Eulal, on the slopes south of Sullodà and to the south of Adi Abuna; and the III Native Brigade by an extension to the right, in occupation of the Debra Sinà Enda Johannes-Gurun-Gurà Torrent front. On Oct. 9th, an infantry regiment with two batteries of artillery made a reconnaissance south of Adowa for a distance of over 15 miles without meeting any enemy forces.

An attempted attack obviously intended as a diversion, was launched by the Dejiak Burrù in the direction of Om Ager, on the extreme west of the Eritrean frontier. It was repelled by detachments on the Tessenei frontier and by other units in that sector. During this period the Italian aircraft were extremely active, maintaining a constant watch on the field of operations and keeping the several commands well informed about the situation.

During these various actions some 500 prisoners were taken who were concentrated in three camps established for the purpose at Adi Qualà, Adi Kaieh, and Mai Edagà. In addition to prisoners a certain

amount of war material, rifles, machine guns, and munitions were captured.

The Italian losses were 30 killed, 70 wounded, and 33 missing.

Chapter Two

EVENTS FOLLOWING ON THE GENERAL ADVANCE ON • THE ADIGRAT-ENTICHO-ADOWA FRONT

In the days following the Italian advance, there was a continuous influx of chiefs and armed tribesmen along the whole front to hand in their rifles and offer their submission. A large number of peasants who wished to return to their houses and fields also presented themselves.

A submission of special importance was that of the Dejiak Haile Selassie Gugsa, nephew of the late King John, who surrendered together with some 1,500 soldiers to the Italian advance guard at Adaga Amus. This incident offered further and convincing evidence that the Abyssinians in the Tigrè were not inclined to fight against the Italians, being well aware of the humanity and justice of their rule in the neighbouring colony of Eritrea.

On Oct. 13th and 14th General De Bono, Commander-in-Chief and High Commissioner for the Italian colonies in East Africa, went to Adowa, where he unveiled the marble pillar in memory of the Italians who fell there in 1896. He received over 100 chiefs, as well as the Coptic and Mussulman clergy of Adowa and Axum. The High Commissioner enquired into the local administration and medical needs of the population, giving orders that every-

thing possible should be done to restore order and help the people, who had been harassed and pillaged by Ras Seyum.

On the morning of the 15th, the III Native Brigade entered Axum, the Holy City, amid the rejoicing of the people. The Abuna (Bishop) of the town at once presented himself to General Maravigna, who had entered at the head of the Native Brigade, and addressed to him the following words:

'We know that civilization has always come from Rome; to her we owe our Church and our Religion —the right of Rome to rule is a spiritual right derived from the justice and strength of her laws.'

Meanwhile in the western plains large numbers of inhabitants, who had abandoned their lands by order of the Negus's chiefs and soldiers, returned with their cattle.

On Oct. 16th in the old fort at Adigrat the Dejiak Haile Selassie Gugsa, with all his followers, swore allegiance to General De Bono who in the name of the King of Italy, appointed him Governor of the whole of the Tigrè amid the enthusiasm of the local chiefs and priests.

Meanwhile the Engineers and gangs of civilian workmen worked at a feverish pace building and improving the roads so as to extend them up to the front. A network of roads some 140 miles in length was completed; once these were laid out the work of improving the alignment and surface of the main roads was undertaken. Hydraulic works were put in hand throughout the whole zone with no less rapidity; 121 new wells were dug, a number of cement

reservoirs built, and three springs which had been abandoned for some time past were reopened.

On Oct. 20th, slavery was abolished throughout the whole province of the Tigrè by the following edict:

'People of the Tigrè, Listen! You know that wherever the Italian flag flies there is liberty. Therefore slavery in whatsoever form is abolished throughout your Country.'

'All slaves who are now in the Tigrè are liberated and the purchase and sale of slaves is forbidden.'

'Anyone infringing the orders of this proclamation will be severely punished as a transgressor against the orders of the Government.'

On the same day the clergy of the 200 Coptic churches of Axum and the surrounding districts and of fifteen mosques in the Tigrè made a collective act of submission and allegiance. This was of great political importance, as it freed the population from all scruples of a religious nature and confirmed their trust in the respect of Italians for their religious beliefs. The Cagnasmack Aile Mariam, son of the Chief of the Essaha region, likewise made his submission. The wheat requisitioned in Axum by Ras Seyum was distributed among the population of the town, and Italian money began to be accepted throughout the whole of the occupied zone.

General Badoglio accompanied by H. E. Lessona, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, visited the whole of the occupied zone between Oct. 18th and 26th. At the headquarters of the II Army Corps at the Italian Consulate, he expressed to a number of

officers gathered there his great satisfaction with the splendid appearance of the troops, and emphasized the historic importance of the reconquest of Adowa and the Tigrè. H. E. Lessona brought greetings from the Italian people and the Head of the Government.

On Oct. 24th the last tract of the new Massowa-Nefasit-Decamerè motor road, with over 1,000 bridges, embankments, etc., was opened.

Among the other chiefs who made their submission were Ligg Amlac, son of a former Chief of the Agame region, and Dejiak Axbaha Adraha of the Shirè, both of whom had been lieutenants of Ras Seyum.

On Oct. 27th the Native Army Corps, the division of Blackshirts under the command of General Diamanti, and Native troops on the Semaiata-Amba Augher front, advanced and occupied the well-watered and fertile Feres Mai region. The enemy retired without offering any resistance.

The Situation after the Italian Advance.

The Italian troops fortified the strong natural position gained on the Adaga Amus-Adi Nefas-Adowa-Axum front in such a way as to be ready for all emergencies, either for a further advance or to repel possible attacks. Depots of food-stuffs and material of all kinds were established in the valleys to the rear, and supplies were brought up by the motor route which had been constructed up to the new front. An adequate distribution of forces guaranteed the absolute security of the lines of operation, while other strong units, detached for the purpose, covered the flanks of the front line troops.

At the end of October the position may be summarized as follows:

. The political situation in the regions occupied and within the sphere of immediate Italian influence was favourable to the progress of operations. The population of the whole of the Tigrè looked to Italian occupation to put an end to a state of anarchy and violence, which had been going from bad to worse. The military situation was also satisfactory to the Italians, since the front occupied which was of considerable tactical strength, enabled them to repel any Abyssinian attack.

The Ethiopian High Command had two plans of campaign between which to choose: either to concentrate their forces to the west of the Takazzè in the western lowlands, thus encircling the Italian right, or else to wait until with the lengthening of communications and the thinning of the line along this extensive front, an opportunity should occur to attack the columns advancing to the south.

The second hypothesis seemed the more probable, as a waiting attitude appeared to be a characteristic of Ethiopian military strategy.

All reports pointed to the existence of a large concentration of troops in the Tembien (some 5,000 men), round which there were numerous smaller groups astride the path leading from Adigrat to Makalè. Some of these were said to be marching northward. Other important concentrations of forces were reported north of Gondar (40,000 men commanded by the Dejiak Ayaleu Burrù), while some thousands were close to the Setit frontier. A further

30,000 troops, commanded by Ras Kassa, were believed to be moving eastward from the Lake Tana zone, perhaps in the direction of Lake Ashangi. It seemed probable that the Abyssinians were collecting a considerable force to prevent an Italian advance on the main road to the south.

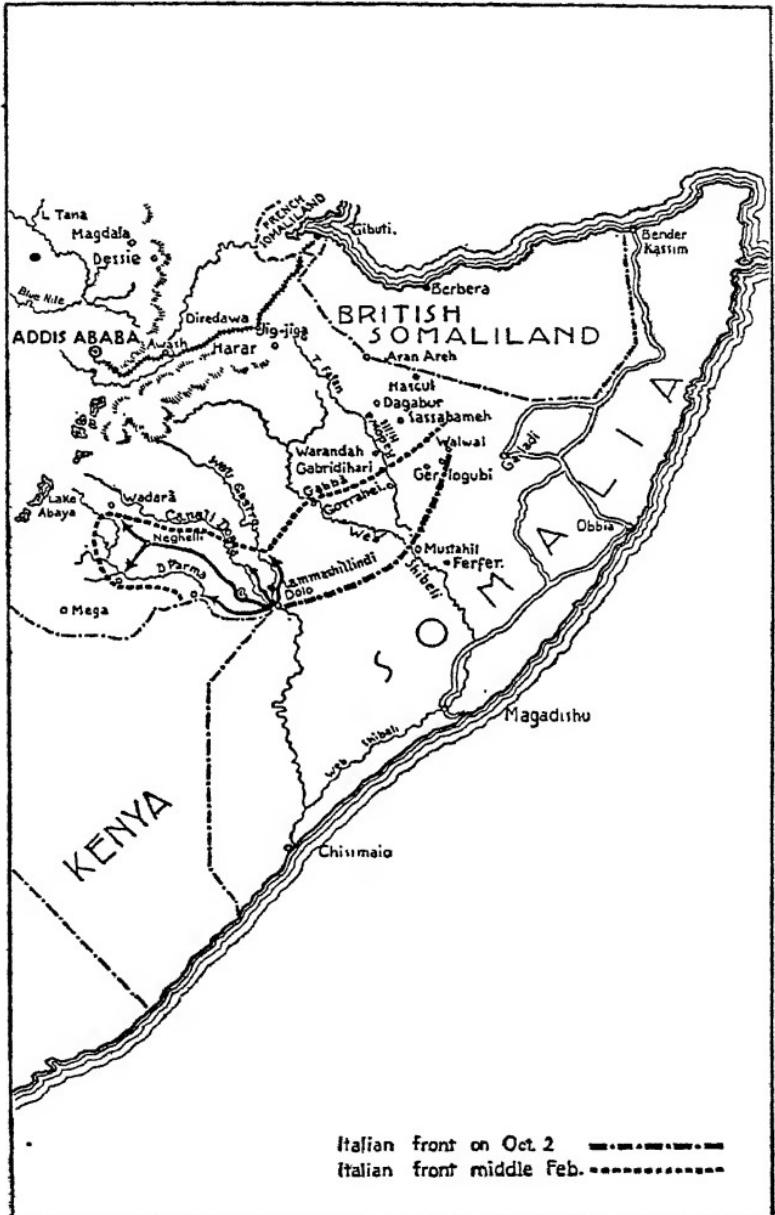
Events in Somalia

During this period active operations were being carried on also in Somalia. In the opening days of October the Italian troops occupied Dolo, and other surrounding places, as well as Oddo and Maladdaie, at the confluence of the Web-Ganale Doria.

A squadron of six Caproni machines bombarded Gorrahei, destroying a munitions depot and scattering the Abyssinian columns marching in the direction of Gherlogubi. On the morning of Oct. 5th the troops of the north-eastern sector after a short fight occupied Gherlogubi, some 30 miles south-east of Wal-Wal.

On the 18th the troops in the Webli Shebeli sector with the co-operation of aircraft, in spite of adverse atmospheric conditions, attacked and occupied Dagnerrei, a naturally strong position about 500 ft. above the river and recently greatly strengthened by important defensive works. The action was opened by planes flying low, which bombed the enemy positions, causing fires and explosions; it was continued by the Dubats of the Bande di Mustahil company, supported by irregular troops of Olal Dinle, Sultan of Shaveli, who had come over with all his men to serve under the Italian

A General Map of Somaliland showing chief towns and rivers.



flag. The enemy put up a stout fight with rifle and machine-gun fire, hitting five machines without causing serious damage, but overwhelmed by a vigorous attack they took to flight and retired beyond Kallafò, which was captured.

Simultaneously another action in the nature of a *coup de main* was launched against the Bur Dodi fort, in the Shebeli valley, which was set on fire and the guard dispersed and pursued. This action was completed by the occupation of Shillave, some 80 miles north-east of Bur Dodi. The Italian losses were very slight, while the enemy left 50 killed and a number of wounded on the field.

These operations whereby the fertile Shaveli region with its peaceful and industrious population fell into Italian hands, advanced the line occupied by the Somali frontier troops from the course of the Shebeli to the Wal-Wal zone.

Chapter Three

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CAPTURE OF MAKALÈ

As is always the case of operations in colonial territories, success depended on the most careful organization of the supply services, not only to enable the combatant forces to live and fight, but also to ensure freedom of movement.

The governing principle of the strategy of the High Command in Eritrea was not merely the attainment of territorial objectives—however great the moral importance of Makalè may have been—but to seek out and if possible destroy the main body of the Abyssinian forces, at that time astride the so-called ‘Imperial Road’: Adigrat–Makalè–Quoram–Dessiè.

The first thrust from the line of the old frontier to the Adigrat–Adowa–Axum front having been made, it was necessary to move forward a considerable part of the previous supply base. With regard to the commissariat it was decided to close the big advanced depots on the Mai Serau (south of Saganeiti) and at Teramni (north of Adi Ugri); to convert the advanced posts at Senafè and Adi Qualà into advanced depots; and to establish gradually new depots with six days’ rations nearer the front line at Fokada, on the Belesa, and at Mai Enda Baria. The bakeries with their Weiss furnaces were also moved closer to the front and the construction of

brick ovens for baking bread in Adigrat and Adowa was put in hand.

This system had worked satisfactorily during the advance to the Adigrat-Adowa-Axum front and during the concentration on the new front of the large forces prepared for the next advance. It was then necessary to ensure the functioning of the supply services for the period in which these forces would be moving further south—a very critical period during which any failure on their part might have had very grave consequences, particularly in view of the likelihood of an encounter with considerable enemy forces.

The Commissariat decided to provide for these needs in the following manner:

(1) By supplementing the stocks of food-stuffs and munitions in the stores and depots at Senafè and Adi Qualà;

(2) By establishing a service base at Adigrat with big stores of food, munitions, means of transport, medical tents and equipment;

(3) By furnishing the Eritrean Army Corps with all the supplies they could require up to the time of their concentration in the Hauzien basin;

(4) By reducing, till it was gradually closed altogether, the Belesa-Enticho base;

(5) By increasing the supplies at the Adowa base.

The advanced depots in the sector to the left of Senafè thus received for the revictualling service a supply of twenty days' rations and ten days' reserve rations for a force of 40,000 Italian troops, 60,000 natives, 40,000 pack animals. An advanced depot with six days' rations was established at Adigrat, and

the bakery for the 1st Army Corps was concentrated there, forty-eight pack transport ovens being assigned to it. The Belesa advanced store with six days' rations for 20,000 men was established in the central sector, and a store of four days' rations for the Native Army Corps was concentrated at Edaga Robò (north of Enticho). The Adi Qualà depot in the right flank sector received twenty days' rations for 40,000 men and forage for 15,000 pack animals.

Three Hospital Units were established for the medical service: one at Adigrat, consisting of one surgical and six field ambulances; one at Mai Weck—four field hospitals and a surgical unit; and one at Adi Abuna (Adowa) of three field ambulances and two surgical units as well as a dental unit. A mobile disinfecting station, capable of receiving 1,000 men every 24 hours, was set up for the preventive treatment and general hygiene of the troops.

Provision was made for the Veterinary Service by the installation of three animal hospitals, two on the route to Adigrat and one in the Adowa sector, thereby clearing the sick lines of the Army Corps before the advance.

To meet the needs of the Artillery, two gigantic dumps were formed in advance positions, one for each of the main lines of operation: that for the left contained 1,750 tons of munitions (entailing the use of 500 lorries over a period of several days), and the other for the right, consisting of 264 tons (100 lorries). A mobile ordnance workshop was also set up at Senafè with an advanced section at Adigrat.

For the Engineer's stores fully 1,500 tons of

material (450 lorry and 38 railway truck loads) were moved to the plateau, and 185 tons of various materials distributed direct to the troops.

A few figures will give some idea of the demands on the transport service and of the material carried. 1,000 tons of food-stuffs were conveyed to the advanced food depots at Edagà Robò; 5,000 tons of food-stuffs, 5,000 tons of munitions, and 3,000 tons of engineering material to the advanced Army Service base at Adigrat. This meant 2,500 lorry journeys, each run consisting of 150 miles, covered in two or three days, at an average speed of 11 miles per hour. The consumption of motor spirit amounted to 150 tons daily. For this work 980 civil and military lorries and 132 motor wagons were used. The utmost care and forethought were exercised so as to avoid waste and the possibility of delays *en route*.

All this was, however, insufficient to ensure the efficiency of the supply services during the advance. It was also necessary to see that all the requisite food and stores reached the fighting forces on the roads leading from the several starting places to Makalè. Since it was not possible when in action, to count on motor transport, it was decided to rely entirely on pack animals. For this purpose 4,000 mules, 2,600 camels, and 1,600 donkeys were collected in the Adigrat zone. All these pack animals who had been kept at pasture till the end of October, fully met the requirements and kept up with the advancing troops without difficulty.

As soon as it was possible to ensure the safety of the cross roads at Sincatà, steps were taken to form

dumps there, and an advance unit of the Army Service base, with some two days' rations and supplies of munitions and engineering material, was instituted. Lastly, provision was made for the troops operating from the lowlands of Agula—the so-called Dankalia Force—by the organization of a reserve store of fifteen days' rations by the Commissariat at Massawa, which also provided for the requisite transport by sea as far as Arafali, and the despatch thence overland to Renda Koma.

To organize and direct all this vast system, the Army Service Corps arranged to appoint some of their own personnel to key positions in the most important centres. The final dispositions were:—At Massawa, the Army Service Depot (previously established there); at Adigrat an Army Service Depot (with staff and means for the formation of independent centres at Senafè and at the Sincatà cross roads); at Belesa and at Adi Qualà, a detached Army Service Staff. These latter were formed from the existing detached centres and had their own liaison organizations with their respective Army Corps.

Topographical Features

The main route of march, Adigrat–Makalè–Lake Ashangi, lay across the spurs of the mountain ridge at the Adaga Amus Pass and the minor ones of Hamed Negask and Antafò, to Quihà near Dolo. From that point radiate the tracks which, following the right hand affluents of the Takazzè, link up with the communications of the Gheraltà and Tembien

regions, while others after winding up the slopes of the plateau, descend to central and northern Dankalia. The route continues into the Endertà region as far as Buya, and then by way of Enda Micael reclaims the valley of Mai Meshik as far as the Alagi gap. It then crosses the Bootà and Aia Passes to the Aia plain, and through the Agumbarra gap enters the zone of Lake Ashangi, and leads to Dessiè and Addis Ababa. From this main route tracks branch off to the plains—one via Mai Cho-Assab, Quiha-Assab to Lake Afrera, and through Beilul along the coast to Assab; another via Quihà-Azbi-Mersa and Fatma Heri following for part of the way the motor road to the Dalol mines; a third via Quihà-Azbi, Lasguddi Torrent Valley, Renda Koma, descending the valley of the Lasguddi Torrent.

Another caravan route starts from Adowa, and passing through Abbi Addi, Sokota, and Magdala, joins the former at Dessiè. Part of this route is too rough and precipitous to be used by pack animals.

Pathways and mule tracks connect these main routes; and in addition to the Adigrat-Adowa path, there are the Adaga Amus-Hauzien-Cachamò, the Hauzien-Agulà, and the Buya-Shelicot-Makalè-Adowa routes.

In this zone, which forms the eastern border of the plateau, the principal Ethiopian rivers have their source. They have cut narrow channels in the sides of the mountains and with their affluents flow through deep valleys till they reach the plain.

The Adaga Amus-Sincatà-Wogorò-Mai Macdèm road, known as the 'Imperial Road', winds first

amid the rocks of the Medri-Senafè, descending precipitously eastward across a vast rugged table-land extending westward to Hauzien. After the Adaga Amus gap there is a series of steep descents, here and there enclosed between high rocks, followed by a stretch of comparatively level country. After climbing the ridges of Enda Teclaimanot, a large fertile plain is reached, surrounded by 'ambe' and conical hills. From here the road descends very sharply to the Sincatà plain and the Enda Woizero church (height 6,000 ft.), and winds through a succession of gorges. The so-called 'road', in fact, was just a narrow pathway of natural formation which for centuries had remained in its natural state. The ground, often very soft, was not suitable for motor traffic which was liable to get bogged. During the advance the Blackshirts of the '28th October' Division were kept busy laying a firm surface on the worst stretches.

In that part of the Tigrè situated in the Dankalia depression where operations were then taking place, the difficulties of movement are well known. This unexplored region has all the characteristics of the desert, basaltic streams, volcanic mountains descending in ridges with craters full of detritus, and chalky ravines. The raids of the Gallas in the Dankalia region have always been carried out with extreme rapidity owing to the barrenness of the country and the unhealthy climatic conditions.

Chapter Four

THE ITALIAN ADVANCE TO MAKALÈ

Makalè is an important centre, not only because it is the chief town of the Enterdà region, but also as being the point of junction of the tracks leading to Dessiè, Hauzien, Adowa, Adigrat and the eastern lowlands. As already stated, territorial occupation however much the Italians desired it for historic reasons, did not form the principal objective of the advance which was necessarily the pursuit and destruction of the main enemy forces, so far as the difficulties of supply permitted. This objective, the presence of considerable enemy forces in the Makalè zone, and the determination of the Commander-in-Chief to leave nothing to hazard, necessitated a vast Italian deployment.

The following plan of campaign was therefore adopted: the main body of the Italian troops was to advance along the Adigrat-Lake Ashangi route, maintaining for the most part a defensive attitude on the Adigrat-Enticho-Adowa-Axum front while carrying out certain tactical offensives in the plains. The advance was divided into two stages; the objective of the first being to seize the Mai Macdem-Makalè-Dolo triangle; that of the second, to occupy as much of the neighbouring territory as the political situation and military conditions would allow.

This plan was to be carried out by two Army Corps.

On the left wing, a special column—formed exclusively of native troops, a large number of whom were mounted on camels—was to ascend from the Dankalia lowlands, so as to flank the main body (~~echeloned~~ to the left rear). It was to advance along the Renda Koma–Amba Gabala–Dera–Azbi route. (This column was generally referred to in the newspapers as the 'Dankalia Force'.)

On the right, the Native Army Corps was to advance by the two routes converging on Hauzien through Feres Mai (1st Division) and Kessad Daga-mit (2nd Division).

The Brigade of Blackshirts attached to the Native Army Corps was to maintain contact with the II Army Corps.

The II Army Corps, with the 'Gavinana' and '21st April' Blackshirt Divisions, a Native Brigade and light columns, were to harass the enemy forces on the Adowa–Axum front towards the Tekazzè valley.

The 'Sila' and 'Gran Sasso' Divisions were held in reserve.

This plan of campaign which was entirely successful, may be thus briefly summarized: a decisive thrust by the main body (1st Army Corps and Native Army Corps) on Makalè and simultaneous attacks for the protection of its flanks by the other units.

The Advance.

'The advance began at dawn on Nov. 3rd, and was continued everywhere throughout the day

without opposition. By the evening the Dankalia Force had crossed the Dugub River; the 1st Corps starting from Maiweck, previously occupied, had reached the Mai Addi Abaghe—Mai Aini zone; the 1st Division of the Native Army Corps had reached Kessad Af Kurro and the 2nd Division, Hauzien. The distances covered were considerable, being an average of 30 miles a day.

Each column advanced in regular march formation, viz.: an advanced guard (generally consisting of native troops), and the main body in three columns, the principal force in the centre, flanked by smaller units. This formation was, of course, subject to such variations *en route* as the character of the terrain might require. Two batteries, ready to deploy, followed the infantry; in rear of them came the pack animals and the Divisional and Army Corps reserves.¹

On the 3rd, the Italian aircraft reported considerable Abyssinian forces in the vicinity of Makalè and in the Lake Ashangi zone marching northward, and in the Tembien. On the extreme right wing, on the Setit, attacks by small bodies of the Abyssinians were easily beaten off.

¹ As an example we give here the marching formation of the 'Sabauda' Division:—

Advanced Guard: One battalion of the 46th Infantry Regiment and two batteries of the 16th Artillery Regiment.

Main Body: Two battalions of the 46th Infantry Regiment, four batteries of the 16th Artillery Regiment; 60th Infantry Regiment; on the right flank, 3rd Bersaglieri Regiment; on the left flank, the '28th October' Division.

Rearguard: Pack animals with guard of one battalion of the 60th Infantry Regiment.

All the infantry regiments with flanking units at wide intervals.

At dawn on Nov. 4th the advance was resumed on the entire front, heavy rain (an exceptional occurrence at this season) considerably hampering the troops through the flooding of some districts. Nevertheless the march was continued and by that evening the various columns had reached the following points:—Gabala, Dankalia Force; Wogoro, 1st Army Corps; the junction of the Hauzien-Makalè mule-track and the valley of the Sullo, Native Army Corps. The distance covered was more than 25 miles—somewhat less than on the previous day on account of weather conditions, and the need to proceed with greater caution owing to the presence of small groups of Abyssinian forces at certain points. On the 5th and 6th the units halted so as to allow the supply services to bring up the necessary rations and munitions.

On the morning of the 5th, the Dejiak Wolde Gabriel, chief of the Agame, presented himself at the Italian lines to make his submission and swear allegiance. The population of the Hauzien welcomed the arrival of the Italian troops, and the local notables, the Coptic and Mussulman clergy made their submission in the absence of the Dajiak Tedla Abbaguben and his son Beien Tedla, Chiefs of the Haramat region (Agame territory), who had withdrawn into the interior.

In the afternoon of the 5th, while combing operations were being carried out south-west of Hauzien in order to make sure that no concentrations of armed Abyssinians were in hiding in this extensive and difficult tract of country, a lively fight took place

near Mount Gundi against a strong enemy force—estimated at some 300 men—of the Dejiak Gabriel. Two Italian officers were wounded; one of them, Lieut. Aldo Lusardi, mortally. As he was dying, he said to his colonel: 'I know, Sir, that I am dying: please tell the Duce that I die with his name on my lips. Long live the King, long live the Duce, long live Italy!'

The enemy's casualties were 100, including killed and wounded.

On Nov. 6th the Italian aircraft reported that Makalè was still occupied by Abyssinian troops. The Italian advance was resumed at dawn on Nov. 7th, with the partial deployment of certain units, so as to be ready for all emergencies.

On the evening of the 7th, the Shimezana Bands and the followers of Dejiak Haile Selassie Gugsa, with a group of Native battalions, were between Enda Micael and Mai Macdem, while the main body ('28th October' Division in the first line and the 'Sabauda' Division in the 2nd) were moving between Tacle Aimanot and Bet Micael, astride the Makalè road. The IV Group of the Blackshirt battalions occupied the Sellat Pass, and the Native Army Corps the northern edge of the Makalè basin.

The aircraft, which again on the 6th had reported the presence of armed bands in Makalè, on the 7th observed that it had been vacated. On the 8th, therefore, orders were given for a general advance on the Dolo-Makalè front.

A column consisting of the Native Brigade under General Dalmazzo was to march on Makalè from the

north-west, while another column, commanded by Col. Broglia, consisting of the Dejiak Gugsa's men and three battalions (one of the 60th Infantry, one of the 3rd Bersaglieri, and one of the 180th Blackshirt Legion and some smaller units), was to close in from the north-east.

The Occupation of Makalè.

In the early hours of Nov. 8th, the two columns marched into the Makalè basin. While the Dalmazzo column moved off immediately to guard the southern side, the Broglia column, preceded by some 1,500 men under Haile Selassie Gugsa, entered the town. This column consisted of the 1st battalion of the 60th Infantry Regiment with the colours and a machine-gun section, the XX battalion Bersaglieri (3rd Regiment), the CLXXX Blackshirt battalion ('28th October' Division), the 'Fulmine' company (100) Arditi of the VI Blackshirt Group, and a platoon of Carabinieri. As a precautionary measure, the officer commanding the column had stationed on the left flank a company of the CLXXX Blackshirt battalion with the 'Fulmine' company, and on the right the XX Bersaglieri battalion.

Crossing the Zeba Mosobo table-land, the column reached the northern edge of the basin and descended rapidly towards Makalè along the existing paths, and re-formed on the plain with colours flying. At the entrance of Makalè the column defiled before the General of the 2nd Native Division, some of them then climbing the hill to Enda Jesus to hoist the

Italian flag at the same spot where in December, 1895, and January, 1896, it had floated in defiance of Menelik's army.

The troops, including the 12th Native Battery of Artillery and a detachment of Askari, formed up inside the old fort above Makalè where Major Galliano had defended himself for six weeks during the campaign of 1895-1896, to march out finally with the honours of war.

By the evening of the 8th, the position was as follows:—

The Shimezana Band and a group of Native battalions between Mount Bolbala and Mount Shefta;

The 'Sabauda' Division close to Mai Dandera;

The '28th October' Division and the VIth Group of Blackshirts at the Quiha road junction;

2nd Native Division between Aoghea Pass and Mount Bolbala;

1st Native Division in the Enda Selassie zone.

The Abyssinians offered no resistance, and on Nov. 12th, Native battalions of the 1st Army Corps occupied Dessa, 25 miles beyond Makalè in the Cuakene Shelicot region. During the following days measures were taken for the rectification and strengthening of the positions gained, so that the points of major importance should be firmly held and the Italian forces more advantageously distributed.

Meanwhile on the left wing the Dankalia column pursued its task of covering the flank of the main body. On the 3rd the Massawa Band had reached Elifan, and the remainder of the column, Renda

Koma; on the 5th a Native battalion also arrived at Elifan; on the 7th the whole column was concentrated there; on the 8th it advanced on Damale, while strong patrols of the Massawa Band pushed on to Subba to make contact with the company of the same Band detached there; on the 9th, the column halted in Damale and the Massawa Band marched to Lelegheddi; on the 10th the column was at Ari, proceeding on the 12th to Arzi. It was immediately attacked by a party of Abyssinians some 500 strong, largely regular soldiers armed with machine guns under Dejiak Kassa Sebhat. Fighting continued till evening, the Abyssinians then retiring with heavy losses, leaving 55 killed on the field. The Italian losses were 20 Askari killed, 4 officers and 52 Askari wounded.

The wounded, among whom was Col. Belli, were evacuated the next day to Agula, where field hospitals had been established—the column being convoyed by aircraft, which also provided food by the use of parachutes. Some 1,900 kg. of food-stuffs were thus supplied to the marching columns.

As a precaution, the slopes of Azbi were occupied by detachments of the Dankalia Force.

The Thrust to the River Takazzè.

Light columns of the II Army Corps had been engaged since Nov. 3rd on reconnaissances with the object of combing out the Medebai, Tabor, Shirè, and Adi Abo zones. On Nov. 5th a detachment of Bands occupied the Selaclaca caravan

route junction, and a battalion of the 83rd Infantry, marching along the Adowa-Enda Teche Haimanot Hagaaza-Enda Micael route, pushed on to Beloet, where it passed the night. On the 7th a Native unit which was making a reconnaissance in the Tzana region (south of Axum) came up with a force under Cagnasmacc Mesfen Araia and compelled it to retire, a few prisoners being captured. On the 10th other Italian forces pushed on to the Mai Shum torrent, to Deraga, Damo Galila, and Az Nebrid.

In view of the general goodwill shown by the population and the absence of any effective resistance, the Italians were able within the next few days to occupy all the fords on the Takazzè. In the course of the daily reconnaissances made by the Italian columns in this zone a lively skirmish took place on Nov. 27th close to Mai Goharo, along the caravan route leading to Kachamo, a place guarded by a body of Italian troops. After a short fight the Abyssinians fled, a few prisoners being captured.

Combing the Gheraltà and the Tembien.

Although there were reported to be no large Abyssinian forces in the mountainous regions of the Gheraltà and the Tembien, it was necessary to make sure that none of the armed followers of Ras Seyum remained in hiding on the right of the Italian communications to Makalè. A surprise attack on Mount Gundi on Nov. 5th had already shown how much trouble could be caused especially to supply

columns or to detached units. During the days following on the occupation of Makalè such attempts had become more frequent, though of a sporadic kind.

The High Command therefore directed that the whole country, especially the Gheraltà and Tembien, should be thoroughly 'combed' by three columns of the Native Army Corps. These troops were chosen for the operation owing to their mobility, as it involved a careful exploration of the wild tangle of mountains and valleys offering many hiding places to small bodies of Abyssinians who were more anxious to 'go to ground' than to offer any serious resistance.

On Nov. 12th two columns left Makalè and Hauzien and, marching on converging routes, were engaged on this task over several days, carrying it through with complete success. There was not much resistance, only one important skirmish taking place on the 17th, in the vicinity of Amba Betlem (east of Abbi Addi, to the right of the River Gheva) where Captain Giuseppe Rinaldi and two Askari fell and a few men were wounded. The Abyssinians left nine dead on the field. Small forces returned to the attack on the following day, when they were quickly repulsed.

Another skirmish between one of the Italian rearguards and a small Abyssinian force took place on Nov. 28th; 10 Abyssinians and 1 Askari were killed.

A similar combing process was carried out in the last days of November by detachments of the Dankalia Force in the Dera zone and on the easter

slopes of the plateau, where they still found some groups of Abyssinians left behind after the flight of the Dejiak Kassa Sebhat, who was defeated in the fight at Azbi.

By the end of November the whole vast Tembien region was in Italian hands. As a proof of the friendly feelings existing in the occupied territory over 800 natives of the Hauzien zone gathered on Nov. 18th round the grave of Lieut. Aldo Lusardi, who had fallen in an ambush, and covered this gallant officer's tomb with flowers.

The Work of the Italian Air Force.

During these operations, scouting machines had been actively engaged in trying to discover the whereabouts of Abyssinian troops, whose presence had been reported for several days in the Makalè-Shelikot zone. On the 16th the reconnaissance patrol reported that a column of some 5,000 men was winding down the valley of the Mai Meshik, north of Amba Alagi. On the 17th, a further reconnaissance revealed the fact that the same column, increased in strength, was converging on the entrance of the valley south of Buja.

An attack was therefore ordered to take place on Nov. 18th. Four bombing squadrons (20 machines) from different aviation camps gathered in the skies above Adigrat between 7 and 8 a.m. and headed for the Mai Meshik valley, between Mai Wafu, Enda Micael and Buja. It happened that at this moment a great part of the Abyssinian column observed during the previous days was marching in

close formation through a narrow gorge between two high and rugged cliffs. The column had not neglected to arm itself against possible air attack, for a number of machine and Oerlikon guns were placed on the mountain sides and these opened a very vigorous fire on the aircraft. The machines, descending to a height of 130–250 feet, attacked the enemy, dropping six tons of bombs and shrapnel, and dispersing the column.

In the course of this action, which lasted two hours, the planes were repeatedly hit, but never in a vital spot. Only one machine was compelled to land at Makalè, from whence it returned to Asmara, after carrying out the necessary repairs. During this action, Sergeant Mechanic Dalmazio Birago was severely wounded by an explosive bullet; he died two days later in the Asmara hospital and was posthumously awarded the Gold Medal for valour.

Chapter Five

OPERATIONS IN SOMALIA

The Abyssinians properly attributed much importance to Gorrahei as a key position for the possession of the whole of the Ogaden, owing to the number of wells existing there, while the rest of the region is almost entirely without water. The town itself is situated on the right bank of the Fafan, and at some distance from the houses stands the Gorrahei fort, in the centre of a vast open plain which it commands. The fort consisted of a double row of trenches connected with one another by deep saps, and aligned in such a way as to make the best use of the course of the Fafan River. At the centre of the defensive system stood a stone building, the old '*garesa*' built by the Mullah. The fort was armed with sixty machine-guns, mounted on carefully prepared platforms, as well as some small trench mortars and artillery.

The action which ended in the occupation of Gorrahei was prepared by a very violent aerial bombardment. During Nov. 2nd, 3rd, and 4th some twenty machines, in mass formation, flew over the place, dropping some 20 tons of bombs. This had the effect of putting various defence works out of action, besides setting fire to a number of huts and depots which formed the most important centre of

Gorrahei. The most effective bombardment took place on the 4th, when machines carried out a surprise attack emerging from the clouds and dropping bombs from a low altitude.

During the various phases of the action the troops guarding Gorrahei were seen to be greatly demoralized, but some of the garrison armed with rifles, made a brave but unorganized resistance. On the 5th the two attacking columns were on the march : one from Gherlogubi, commanded by Col. Maletti, the other from Ferfer, commanded by Gen. Frusci. Gorrahei was to be invested from two sides, the Maletti column attacking from the north and the Frusci from the east. On the afternoon of the 5th the officers commanding the columns received information from the Air Force that airmen, flying over Gorrahei that morning, had received the impression that the place had been practically abandoned. A scouting patrol saw some fires alight in the interior of the encampment, but not meeting with any resistance, entered the trenches towards 11 p.m. and found that the place had been evacuated. The columns, continuing their march throughout the night met before dawn at Mererale, a few miles from Gorrahei, and occupied the latter place in the very early hours of the morning. On taking possession, the Italians found a large quantity of rifles, munitions, shells and medical stores, besides a large reserve of food and a motor car.

According to a prisoner taken at Gorrahei the accuracy of the air bombardment had severely shaken the morale of the Abyssinian troops, only

the authority of the Commander, Afework, had succeeded in keeping the men at their posts. During the bombardment of the 4th, however, Afework was seriously wounded. This had the result of completely demoralizing the defence, and after placing their commander in a motor car, they gathered up their arms and the greater part of their munitions and material, and on the same day began their flight northward. A few men remained in the field but fled precipitately on the following evening at the approach of the Italian troops, leaving alight the fires which the scouts had observed.

On the same morning (Nov. 6th) the pursuit of the fugitives began. With great difficulty a column of armoured cars managed to cross the Fafan which had flooded the centre of the entrenched area, and immediately pushed north along the right bank of the river. At the same time a flying column, under Col. Maletti's command, started in pursuit along the left bank. This column reached Gabredarre on the following day, and advanced into the north of the district, engaging in a number of skirmishes with the rear-guard of the fugitives, and capturing some hundreds of prisoners (a *fitalurari* and a *dejasmack* among others), several hundred rifles, some cars and two guns.

The Air Force played an important part in bringing about the success of operations on the Somalia frontier. Its work, especially at the beginning of the campaign, was hampered by atmospheric conditions which not only made flying difficult, but rendered some aerodromes useless owing to the rains

and flooding. Besides the direct participation of aircraft in the operations on Gorrahei, reconnaissances were carried out daily in the Dolo and Oddo districts, in the Gherlogubi, and over positions behind the enemy lines, resulting in most valuable information being obtained. Concentrations of troops and columns ~~on~~ the march were also bombed. In many localities the machines were met with rifle and machine-gun fire, several being struck in non-vital parts.

The Action against Lammashillindi.

Aircraft reported that a column of considerable strength—that of Ras Desta Damtou—had occupied the village of Lammashillindi, some 80 miles north of Dolo, clearly with the intention of making it their base of operations against the Italian positions. On the receipt of this information it was decided to forestall an Abyssinian advance by an attack to be carried out by the Dolo detachment of Dubats and if possible to surprise Ras Desta's force.

On the evening of Nov. 21st Dubat patrols came in contact with some hostile units. On the morning of the 22nd the Dubat detachment attacked with great determination, forcing its way through a dense thicket, although Ras Desta Damtou's advanced guard who had been on the *qui vive* all night, had had time to prepare their defences. With clock-like punctuality the aircraft reached the position and bombed the enemy from a low altitude. The fighting continued from 7.30 a.m.

till noon, when the Abyssinians fled, being pursued for several miles.

In the village of Lammashillindi the Dubats set fire to all the stores which could not be removed ; it was noted that the reserves of food and medical stores bore English marks. Some hundred dead Abyssinians were counted in the thicket. Among them were two *Grasmacs*, Abba Guraja and Argau, of whom the first named had been attached to the *Fitaurari* Barrhei, who had been wounded in the previous action. Some fifty rifles and a number of pistols and rounds of ammunition were captured. The Italian casualties were 4 Dubats killed, 5 wounded, 2 missing.

As has been said, the distance from Dolo was about 80 miles ; and as the advanced patrols of *Dubats* came into contact with the first Abyssinian forces on the evening of the 21st, obviously the greater part of the distance was covered in the two night marches of Nov. 19th-20th and 20th-21st. This shows the remarkable state of physical fitness of the *Dubats* and the mobility of these troops.

During the first two months of the war nearly all the Italian operations in Somalia had been hampered by rain and the flooding of the rivers. While due allowance must be made for the part played by aircraft, nevertheless the enormous discrepancy between the Italian casualties and those of the Abyssinians bears testimony to the training of the Italian troops, the co-operation between different arms and ranks, and the skilful utilization of the ground and means at their disposal.)

In all the operations carried out during this period the bulk of the arms, munitions, and material captured was of British manufacture.

In the last days of November, chiefs, notables, and soldiers of the Ogaden, belonging to the Abdalla, Talamoche, and Ghelimes tribes presented themselves at Kallafo in the Shaveli zone to the Italian authorities and made their submission, asking to be allowed to take part in the operations against Addis Ababa.

A squadron of aircraft, flying from the Gorrahei aerodrome, again bombarded the fortifications of Dagabur, succeeding also in destroying a column of motor vehicles.

Chapter Six

THE FIGHTING ON THE TAKAZZÈ AND IN THE TEMBIEN

During the first two weeks of December a lull occurred along most of the front. The Italians were engaged in the organization and co-ordination of the positions gained ; the supply services were busy preparing and completing the new bases, while on the left wing Italian and native troops were occupied in the arduous task of policing the Gheraltà and Tembien.

The Air Force reported the approach of considerable Abyssinian forces on the front south of Makalè, and preparations were made for bombing raids. One of these was carried out against a column presumably forming part of the forces of Ras Immiru of Gojjam, marching in the Woghera towards Debareck. On Dec. 6th a large number of bombs were dropped in the vicinity of Dessiè on buildings clearly used for military purposes, and on large camps in the neighbourhood of the town.

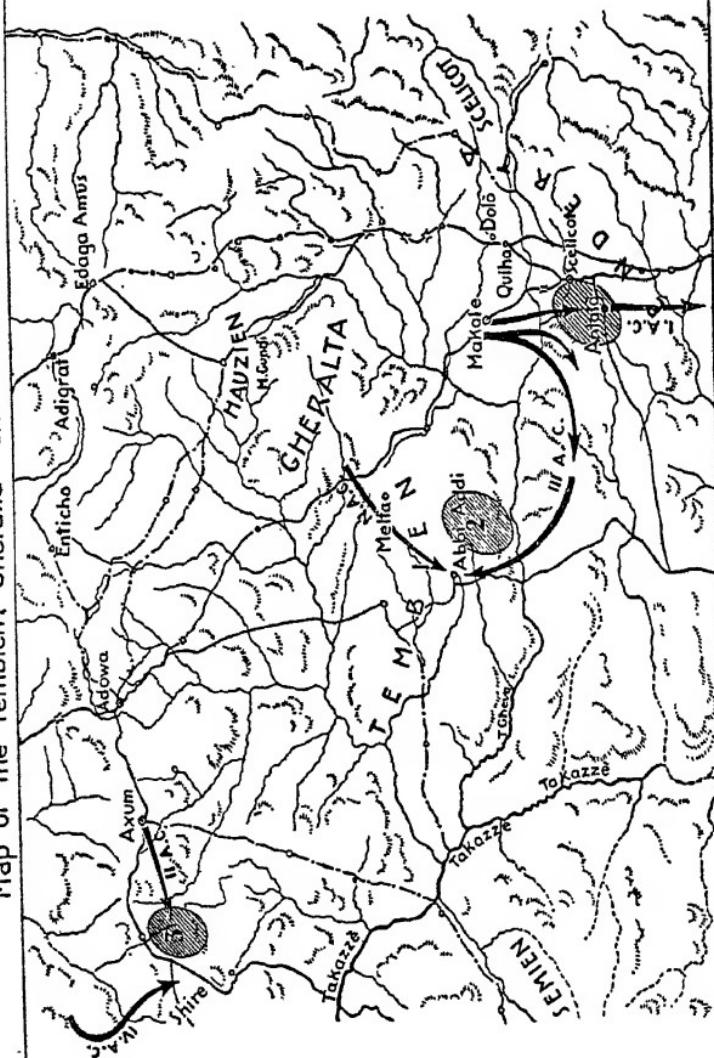
Reports were issued from Addis Ababa which asserted that the town was undefended and that the Red Cross Hospitals were among the objectives that had been hit. Reliable information also received from the Abyssinian capital itself, however, showed that tens of thousands of troops were concentrated

in the vicinity of the city. The numerous anti-aircraft guns that immediately opened fire on the machines proved that the aerial attack had been expected and, therefore, constituted a normal act of war. A number of photographs taken by airmen proved that the bombardment had been carried out exclusively on points of military importance—the ammunition dump, the *ghebi* ('palace'), the aerodrome, the telephone exchange, and military encampments. The Red Cross Hospital had been spared, although it was subsequently discovered to have been occupied by people not belonging to the medical service. It was further proved that many tents, the aviation camp and even vacant areas had been improperly protected with the sign of the Red Cross.

Reconnaissances carried out during the following days showed that the Abyssinian advance towards the north had somewhat slowed down and that the armies had divided and concealed themselves. Information received and the desultory resistance encountered, confirmed the view that Ras Seyum Mangasha intended to defend Tembien, a region that lent itself particularly well to guerrilla methods of fighting.

The troops left behind by Ras Seyum, under the orders of Dejiak Amareh Garesillassi, had constructed defensive works in many places, especially at the confluence of the Mai Weri and the Tanqha. Columns of Italian and Native troops rapidly gained complete control of this difficult region. During the first fortnight of December, light columns on the

Map of the Tembien, Gheralta and Takazzé.



Positions occupied by Ras Mulughieta (1) Ras Kassa and Sejum (2) and Ras Mimeruh (3)
before the battle of Tembien (27 Feb - 1 March) and Shire (28 Feb)

Italian right wing continued to advance towards the Takazzè, occupying the principal fords, and the last half of December saw brisk fighting on both the right and left wings.

Fighting in the Takazzè Region.

The Italian High Command had observed unwonted Abyssinian activity in the region to the south of the Takazzè, and on Dec. 14th Native irregular troops were ordered to carry out scouting expeditions in the Haida region to the south of the Takazzè, between the two fords of Addiai Techeb and Mai Timket. In order to engage the Abyssinian forces under the most favourable tactical conditions, the Italian outposts were ordered to evacuate the ford south of Mai Timket with a view to inducing them to cross, so that they could be surrounded and destroyed on the northern bank.

The Italian troops accordingly evacuated the ford and Ras Immiru's vanguard advanced to the attack. The Abyssinians numbered over 5,000 men, some of them well equipped in European style and provided with automatic weapons and hand grenades. The battle lasted all day, the Askari repulsing every attack. In the evening the Italian force began to fall back by way of Addi Enkato and Eddaga Shaha to the gorge of Dembeguina, between Mount Asar and Mount Nanamba, on the northern edge of the Tsembela regions.

Another Abyssinian column of about 2,000 men had, however, at the same time forded the Takazzè south of Addi Aitckeb, and by the difficult path of

Charasiga had already reached Dembeguina, and attacked the Italian troops who had been placed there to hold the road to Axum. Thus the Native units who had fallen back from the Mai Timket, caught between two strong enemy forces, were obliged to clear a way for themselves with the bayonet. Meanwhile Native and Italian troops, advancing against the flanks of the Abyssinian column which had marched by Dembeguina, came into action on the 17th, and succeeded in surrounding the enemy. The Abyssinian losses were heavy, 500 dead being counted after the action. The Italian losses were: killed—7 Italian officers and 29 men, 48 Native non-commissioned officers and 197 Askari ; wounded—2 officers, 2 privates and 25 Askari, in addition to 4 officers and 9 Italian soldiers killed and 3 wounded in the earlier encounters.

The high percentage of losses among the Italian officers was due to the numerical inferiority of their forces at the beginning of the action ; to the mountainous nature of the country, with which the enemy was well acquainted ; to the necessity of holding up the enemy as long as possible so as to allow sufficient time for the Italian tactical plan to develop, and, above all, to the gallant behaviour of the officers. It should also be remembered that some of the Abyssinian troops had special orders to pick them off. In the many bayonet attacks, the Italian soldiers had a chance to prove their superiority over the enemy in hand to hand fighting.

Whilst this engagement was proceeding on the Takazzè, Abyssinian troops which had approached

the Italian advanced posts on the front to the south of Makalè, attempted by repeated attacks to create a diversion in that sector of the front, but the intensive fire of the Italian machine-guns succeeded in frustrating all their efforts. The Air Force played a very active part notwithstanding the unsuitable nature of the country, and the thick vegetation and rocks which assisted the enemy in taking cover. On Dec. 20th Italian planes successfully bombed patrols belonging to the army of Ras Immiru in the neighbourhood of the Takazzè near Mai Timket.

Fighting in the Tembien Region.

The Abyssinian attempts against the Italian front on the Takazzè having proved unsuccessful, they endeavoured to counteract the effect of this defeat by an attack on another part of the front, and chose the zone of Abbi Addi, the chief town of the Tembien. Abbi Addi is an important centre, since it is the junction of four caravan routes : to the north, towards Kachamoh in the heart of the Tembien ; to the west, towards the Takazzè ; to the south, towards Sokota, passing through the vast region of Saloa ; and to the east, towards Gheraltà.

An attack by Abyssinian patrols, presumably belonging to the forces of northern Lasta (Wag), on the morning of the 20th on the Italians to the south of Abbi Addi, met with stubborn resistance and was quickly beaten off.

Despite this defeat about 5,000 Abyssinian soldiers from Wag under the command of Dejiak Maru

Avram and the Bigerondi Lalibelu Gagre, both sub-chiefs of Ras Seyum Mangasha, made a frontal attack on the Italian positions on the Tanqua near Abbi Addi. At the same time a strong enemy detachment crossed the Andino plateau and attacked the Italian lines near the church of Enda Mariam Quarar. Taking advantage of the very difficult terrain which is broken and covered with thick scrub, they succeeded in crossing the Mai Tanqua and capturing Abbi Addi. They pushed on to the north, whilst on the east they reached the church of Enda Mariam Quarar.

The Italian infantry, with the support of artillery and aeroplanes, made a vigorous counter-attack, whilst a column of Italian and native troops at once started a manœuvre intended to outflank the hostile forces. An Abyssinian attempt to outflank the left of the turning column was frustrated by other Italian troops after severe hand-to-hand fighting. At the end of the day the Abyssinians who had been driven back to the left bank of the Enda Mariam Quarar, took flight, and were pursued for a considerable time towards the south by the Askari. The Abyssinian casualties were about 700 dead and 2,000 wounded, and a quantity of arms and munitions were left on the field. The Italian losses also were considerable : 7 officers killed and 6 wounded, 167 Askari killed and 160 wounded. These losses were mainly due to the same causes as those in the fighting near the Takazzè.

On Dec. 22nd, the Italian Air Force bombed enemy concentrations between Lake Ashangi and

Quoram, setting fire to many tents and depots of stores. A column numbering about 3,000 fugitives was located by the airmen who flew low and registered many hits. The aeroplanes were again subjected to anti-aircraft attack but suffered no damage.

This fighting in the Tembien differed from the guerrilla tactics hitherto adopted by the Abyssinians during the campaign, in that they had reverted to the mass attacks which had always been their traditional method of warfare. On every occasion, however, they found the Italians well prepared for resistance.

Operations in Somalia.

After the Italian capture of Gorrahei, the Abyssinian Command hastened to select a position further back and to put it in a state of defence. The place chosen was Dagabur, which in that sector commands the road to Harar. The nature of the field fortifications showed that there were foreign officers commanding the Abyssinian troops. The Caproni squadrons attacked this place, and flying over Warandab, Hamanlei, and Sassabaneh the watering place for caravans, they carried out two successive bombardments on Nov. 26th and 28th. Several tons of bombs were dropped, setting fire to a number of *tukuls* and buildings within the fortified lines used as quarters for the command and as magazines. Airmen flying over Dagabur noticed that a building, the roof of which was covered with the Red Cross, was being used as a

refuge for natives flying from the surrounding countryside. On the same day, aeroplanes flew over Jig-Jiga, which was believed to be the Abyssinian headquarters of the Somalia front. As a matter of fact General Wehib Pasha, commander-in-chief of the Abyssinian forces, was quartered there. The flight was made simply for scouting purposes and no bombs were dropped.

During the first two weeks of December, the chief military activity in Somalia was in the western sector (Upper Juba), in consequence of the movements of the forces of Ras Desta Damtou. At the beginning of the war this column had announced its intention of attacking the Italians and throwing them into the sea, but it had advanced very slowly. The first sign of activity observed by the Air Force was the collection of great numbers of cattle at some eight miles from the Italian lines. On Dec. 5th it saw Abyssinian formations between Filtu and Neghelli who evidently intended to advance towards the frontier of Kenya. While flying low in order to obtain further information, the machines were met with rapid fire from rifles and anti-aircraft guns, an observer being killed. A number of bombs were dropped.

The situation remained practically unchanged during the following days, and it was decided to bomb the main body of the column encamped in the neighbourhood of Neghelli. On the morning of Dec. 14th, fifteen airplanes flew over the Abyssinian camp and carried out a successful attack. Troops and cattle were stampeded and many military

magazines were set on fire ; four machines were hit, without sustaining much damage.

On Dec. 13th an event took place at Gorrahei in the Ogaden sector of considerable importance in its bearing on the political situation. A great *shir* (traditional gathering) was held for the purpose of making a solemn submission *en masse* to the Italian Authorities : thirty-five chiefs and notables of Ogaden belonging to the Rer Abdullah tribe were present accompanied by their followers. This large concourse of natives on the great plain of Gorrahei made the ceremony a very impressive sight. At the same time, the well-known Mohammed Heid and the Chief Macail, who also belonged to the Rer Abdullah, came to Gherlogubi to make their submission. In view of the need of providing for civil government in the Ogaden, officials of the Italian Colonial Service were appointed as Commissioners at Gorrahei and Buslei.

The Italians found the Abyssinian troops in this sector to be better provided with modern means of defence than had been anticipated ; they also possessed motor cars and armoured cars which were believed to have come from Harar and Jig-Jiga. It was therefore realized that General Graziani's troops as they continued their advance towards the highlands of Harar, were likely to meet with increasing resistance conducted with up-to-date weapons. In addition, the existence of good roads and the nearness of the railway would facilitate the transport of arms and munitions for the Abyssinians.

The great part played by the Air Force in these

operations and its value in this type of warfare need hardly be stressed. It had already succeeded in penetrating more than 300 miles over hostile territory.

The Italians believed that the Abyssinian Command considered the Somalia sector to be of the greatest importance, strong detachments had been posted in commanding positions and the contingents of Dejiak Nasibu Zemanuel, Ras Ghie-tachwo Abba Anbateh and Ras Desta Damtou were concentrated on that frontier.

Chapter Seven

OPERATIONS IN THE TIGRÈ

In the previous chapters particulars have been given which afford some idea of the organization of the Italian supply services necessary to the development of operations in the Tigrè region. Given the strength of the forces engaged, this organization necessarily demanded very considerable additions and improvements. The replenishing of supplies on a front extending for nearly 800 miles, and the long distances to be covered—the new motor road from the old frontier to Makalè was 150 miles in length—made heavy demands both on the transport services and the roads. During January great efforts were made to maintain and improve the means of communication.

At the same time positions on the right wing especially in the Axum sector were consolidated and police work was in progress in the Tembien. The continuance of skirmishes with small Abyssinian forces revealed their intention to take full advantage of the nature of the country to harass the Italians. Early in January the Air Force reported the presence of strong Abyssinian forces which were moving from the northern Lastra along the Sokota-Fenarao mule-track in the direction of Seloa, a region of the Tigrè lying south of the middle course of the

Gheva River and its tributary the Gabat. Along the valley through which these two water-courses flow, signs of Abyssinian activity became more and more apparent and bombing raids were repeatedly made in the first fortnight of January. The same was the case in the Mai Ghibba zone—at the confluence of the Gabat and the Gheva—where a number of skirmishes occurred.

Another concentration of Abyssinian forces was observed in the Mai Ghibba zone and the Italian High Command ordered an attack by two columns—one of white troops supported by artillery and trench mortars, and one of Askari, who were to carry out an encircling movement. The manœuvre met with complete success. The Abyssinians suffered heavy casualties and abandoned arms and munitions on the field. The Italians lost 1 native non-commissioned officer and 2 Askari killed; 3 officers, 2 native non-commissioned officers and 3 Askari wounded.

To the north of the Gheva, in the Andino region (south of Addi Abbi), aircraft also observed and effectively bombed considerable forces.

Besides reports from scouting aeroplanes, the High Command had received reliable information pointing to the existence of an Abyssinian army—estimated at over 40,000 men—which was approaching the Italian positions in southern Tembien from the direction of Saloa, Avergalle, and Endertà, while a still larger one was encamped south of the Makalè zone. The Abyssinian plan was to attack in the direction of the Abarò Pass and to cross the

Gheraltà so as to cut the lines of communication between Makalè and Hauzien, thus encircling the right wing of the Italian forces in the Makalè region, which were to be engaged by the Ethiopian army from Endertà.

The command of the Abyssinian forces moving towards southern Tembien was held by Ras Kassa Darghieh, a person of great authority in the Ethiopian feudal system, being related to the Menelik dynasty and a second cousin of the Negus, as well as a feudatory of Central Amhara and the Salale. Two sons of Ras Kassa (Wondwossen Kassa and Averra Kassa) commanded another and stronger force, which was to attack Abbi Addi. They were preceded by an advance guard formed of men from the Wag, commanded by the Bigerondi Lalibelu Gabre. Smaller units despatched to the Andino region in the direction of the Abarò Pass, were commanded by Ras Seyum Mangasha, who had with him some detachments from the Tigrè and Shoan forces under the direct orders of Dejiak Asfaussen Kassa, the third son of Ras Kassa Darghieh. The main body of Ethiopian troops in front of the Italian lines in the zone south of Makalè was under the command of Ras Mulughieta, Minister of War. A further clue to the offensive plans of the enemy command was afforded by the despatch of the Cavalry belonging to Ras Mulu-ghieta's Corps, to form a reserve for the troops of Ras Kassa Darghieh and Ras Seyum Mangasha.

It is necessary to bear in mind the extremely difficult character of the terrain which afforded

many opportunities for ambushes and surprise attacks, as well as providing excellent hiding places for small bodies of troops. In this region the mountain sides of the plateau are deeply furrowed by erosion and broken up by deep chasms and precipices, partly covered by brambles and growths of thorny acacia. The 'roads' were merely bridle-paths rendered still more impassable by the rains and landslides. To escape the vigilance of the Italian aircraft, the Abyssinians made their marches mostly by night, remaining under cover during the day.

The Italian High Command decided to take the initiative and to attack the Abyssinians before they had time to get their forces into position. This operation was conducted in two successive stages. The III Army Corps (the '23rd March' Blackshirt Division and the 'Sila' Division) which was encamped to the south-west of Makalè and Neguida and Debri, moved towards Gangarah, so that by commanding the Gabat River, it cut the lines of communication by means of which the Abyssinians could have sent reinforcements from Ras Mulughieta's main army to the relief of those operating in southern Tembien. This advance allowed time for the deployment of Italian forces on stronger positions, and kept a considerable number of Abyssinian troops engaged.

On Jan. 19th, the advanced guard of the III Corps occupied the villages of Neguida and Debri without opposition, but on the following day the '23rd March' Division met with a spirited resistance

by Abyssinian units. The mountain dominating the Gabat Valley from the north was not occupied by the Abyssinians, but as soon as the Italian Division had crossed the ridge, it was received with a heavy fire from the defence positions prepared by the enemy on the opposite slopes. These positions took advantage of the configuration of the ground, and displayed a degree of technical knowledge clearly proving the presence of European advisers and instructors. H.R.H. the Duca di Pistoia, who was commanding the Division, ordered the advanced guard to await the arrival of supports before attacking, and the artillery opened a heavy fire on the enemy positions, which were abandoned. Meanwhile, on the right, the 'Sila' Division had reached the confluence of the Kalamino and the Gabat Rivers. They also met with resistance on the slopes south of Gabat which however they captured on the afternoon of Jan. 20th, the occupation of the mountain being completed on the night of Jan. 21st. In these actions the Abyssinians lost over 200 dead, while the casualties in the '23rd March' Division were : 3 officers killed and 2 wounded ; 60 men killed or wounded ; in the 'Sila' Division : 3 officers and 33 men wounded.

The second stage of the manœuvre was an attack on the Abyssinian forces in the southern Tembien. The Native Army Corps was to advance from east to west, across the high ridge running north and south, and along the course of the Mai Tanqua. At the same time, the 2nd Division of the '28th October' Blackshirts was to occupy the Warieu

Pass and carry out a demonstration in support. On Jan. 20th, a strong column of the Native Division, marching from Mai Meretta, encountered the Abyssinians in position on the heights of Zaban Kerketa. The fighting lasted all day, until the enemy retired on Melfà, leaving over 1,000 dead on the field. On Jan. 21st the same column, co-operating with another arriving from the north, occupied Hills Lata and Kuit.

On the same day (Jan. 20th) the 2nd Division of '28th October' Blackshirts, marching from the Addi Zubbaha zone, occupied the Warieu Pass without much difficulty, and towards evening despatched the first Company of the Blackshirt battalion attached to the Native Army Corps, to carry out a demonstration towards Abbi Addi, in the Debra zone. The Blackshirt column, detached from the command of the '28th October' Division, had advanced as far as the slopes of Amba Debra, when on the morning of the 21st it was violently attacked by large Abyssinian forces, who had concealed themselves among the surrounding ambas. The column, by fierce fighting, succeeded in preventing the repeated attempts of the enemy to encircle it and effected a junction with the Blackshirt Division, which had meanwhile consolidated its position on the Warieu Pass.

During the night of Jan. 21st-22nd, a large Abyssinian force, despite the difficulties of the country, moved with great rapidity on Abbi Addi and attempted to force the Warieu Pass so as to cut the Italian communications between Endertà

and Gheraltà. Fighting was resumed on the morning of Jan. 22nd, the Abyssinians following their traditional method of trying to overwhelm their enemy by sheer weight of numbers. They were, however, met by a resolute defence, Italian aircraft playing a considerable part in the action both by dropping bombs and machine-gun fire, while other machines were dropping supplies of ammunition. On the morning of the 23rd they made a last desperate effort to force the Warieu Pass, but just as another column of the Native Army Corps which had arrived from Addi Zabahha was preparing to launch its attack on their right wing, they broke and fled. Although worn out with three days' fighting, some units of the '28th October' Division pursued the retreating Abyssinians over the mountains, inflicting heavy losses. During these actions their casualties amounted to 5,000, among the dead being many chiefs and sub-chiefs ; it was impossible to estimate the number of wounded.

The Italian losses amounted to—25 officers killed, 19 wounded ; 289 white troops killed and wounded ; 310 Askari killed and wounded. A large quantity of arms and munitions were captured.

The Abyssinian forces after these disastrous defeats fell back to the south and west.

Operations in Somalia.

In the middle of January the operations which were in progress under General Graziani on the Somalia front ended in the destruction of the army

of Ras Desta Damtou, the son-in-law of the Negus. The Ras's advance from his headquarters in the Neghelli zone had a two-fold objective—first to threaten the Italian left flank so as to stop the column's further march to the north, and secondly to extend his own line in order to obtain fresh supplies of food. His columns converged on a district between Dolo and the Kenya frontier on the banks of the Dawa Parma River. It may have been the Ras's intention, after ascertaining the Italian strength in this sector, to endeavour to surround the positions at Dolo so as to be able also to invest the forces at Lugh-Ferrandi. But faced with the strong defensive works on the Dawa Parma front, he did not dare to attack at once, and halted with the main body of his army in the territory lying between the Gestro, the Ganale Doria, and Dawa Parma Rivers.

These concentrations of Abyssinian troops provided considerable targets, and after reconnaissance flights the Italian Air Force carried out almost daily attacks with bombs and machine-gun fire. The machines often returned bearing marks of the enemy bullets ; a few machines crashed, and Lieut. Pilot Minniti was captured and after being brutally tortured, was put to death. The Abyssinians hid in thickets and extended their formations, showing no intention of withdrawing, no doubt waiting for a favourable opportunity to carry out a surprise attack. General Graziani forestalled them by deciding to take the offensive on a large scale. He began towards the end of December with a bold enterprise embracing a wide radius, which he

entrusted to the irregular Bands of the Chief of the Shaveli, Olol Dinle, who pushed along the course of the upper Webi Shebeli, into the Imi region. This afforded an opportunity to reconnoitre the country and drew to the Web Gestro a part of the hostile forces which might otherwise have been able to reinforce those of Ras Desta. On the return march Dinle's column occupied Danano in the Bawa valley, joining up with the followers of Hessen Aile, Chief of the Ogaden Rar Dalal tribe, who had sworn allegiance to the Italians.

The bulk of the Balè army under Dejiak Bejene Mered and a strong detachment of the Harrarghie troops were despatched to parry Olol Dinle's threatening move. Meanwhile General Graziani was preparing for an offensive which had as its first objective the dislodging of the Abyssinians from their lines on the Dawa Parma. The bulk of his command was transferred to this sector on Jan. 10th and though the Dawa Parma and the Ganale Doria were both in flood, by means of pontoons all the troops and stores had crossed the rivers by Jan. 12th.

The advance then continued in two columns along the Ganale Doria and the Dawa Parma. The right column, following the course of the Ganale Doria towards Amino and Malka Dida, reached Goboru on the 13th, and there split in two : the mechanized section headed directly for Neghelli, the other protecting the right flank, continued to follow the course of the Ganale Doria in the direction of Bander. Thus three columns were formed. On the evening of the 13th, the centre column, consisting of

native troops and Aosta machine-gun units, reached Ddei-Ddei, on the edge of a vast table-land, where it met with strong resistance. Repulsed during the night, the enemy reopened the attack on the morning of the 14th, but after a few hours turned and fled, pursued by the mechanized section. The left column, following the course of the Dawa Parma, had also come into contact with the enemy, and after some sharp fighting on the 12th, 13th, and 14th, arrived on the 14th at Galgallo where in a bend of the river a strong rear-guard was holding an entrenched position to prevent the passage of the Italians. Fighting continued throughout the day and night of the 14th and 15th, but on the 15th the position was captured.

Defeated at Ddei-Ddei and at Galgallo, some of the Abyssinian forces retired on Neghelli, some up the Ganale Doria, others dispersed in the woods, and yet others pushed southward in an attempt to reach the Dawa Parma. These last encountered the Italian left column and were compelled to surrender after fierce fighting. More than 3,000 of them fell in this sector, either killed in action or dying of thirst and hunger, the wells having been occupied by the Italians.

Of Ras Desta's army all that remained were the detached units in the rear near Neghelli and Wadara, and against these General Graziani launched the central mechanized column. After occupying Filtu on the 18th, this column reached Neghelli—about 300 miles from Dolo—on the 19th, the Genoa and Aosta companies entering it at noon on

the same day. Ras Desta Damtou, instead of attempting any resistance or encouraging his troops by his personal example, fled at the approach of the Italian forces, abandoning the wireless apparatus, his personal luggage, and even the insignia of his command—the *negarit*, the famous drums which every Abyssinian Chief of high rank carries with him in war. At the headquarters of the command, the Italians found also the decorations, luggage, and private papers of the Belgian Lieutenant Frère, technical adviser to Ras Desta.

It is estimated that the Abyssinian casualties were no less than 10,000. Large quantities of arms and munitions, herds of cattle, stores, and materials of all kinds, as well as an Abyssinian colour, were captured. In all the engagements the enemy made constant use of dum-dum bullets.

On the Somalia front as elsewhere the behaviour of the Italian troops both white and coloured was admirable, in spite of the adverse climatic conditions and the inevitable hardships, such as the strict rationing of water, which caused considerable suffering to men marching long distances under a tropical sun and choked with dust. Thanks to the careful and severe husbanding of their resources, the troops still had sufficient rations for nine days and water for six when they occupied Neghelli. As the successful issue of these operations became more and more certain, General Graziani ordered a number of units to return to the base so as to lessen the strain on the supply services, caused by the rapidity of the advance.

Immediately after the occupation of Neghelli, some Italian units were despatched northward, and on Jan. 23rd they reached the Wadara locality, over 50 miles from Neghelli. After a sharp skirmish the enemy retired and prisoners, stores of food, munitions, etc., were captured. A munitions depot was blown up by the Abyssinians before they retreated. During the following days the organization of the Neghelli and Dawa Parma regions was completed. A mixed column marching along the Duma Dawa, after repulsing some Abyssinian forces led by a Greek officer, occupied Malka Murri about 190 miles from Dolo on Jan. 26th.

As soon as Neghelli was occupied, General Graziani issued a proclamation abolishing slavery in all its forms throughout the entire territory of Galla Borana. During the end of January a number of chiefs and notables of the Galla Borana with their armed followers made their submission to the Italian political authorities at Neghelli. Among these local representatives was the Chief of the Somali Digodia who indeed had already accepted an Italian protectorate under the Lugh convention drawn up by Bottego in 1895.

It is unnecessary to emphasize the importance of these operations. The victory freed the left flank of the Italian line from a threat which might have assumed considerable proportions and a large tract of territory of Galla Borana was conquered.

Chapter Eight

THE BATTLE OF ENDERTÀ AND THE CAPTURE OF AMBA ARADAM

After the experience in the first battle of the Tembien (Jan. 19th-23rd) of the powers of resistance of the armies of Ras Kassa Dargieh and Ras Seyum Mangasha, the Italian High Command instead of immobilizing great forces to protect the lines of communication between Adigrat and Makalè, decided to occupy the more important passes in strength.

In addition to some 40,000 men massed in the Tembien, a second more important army of some 80,000 led by Ras Mulughietta was encamped to the south of the Italian position at Makalè. While the former of these armies (that of Ras Kassa and Ras Seyum) was to break through the Italian lines between Makalè and the Tembien, the latter was to march on Makalè once this town was isolated from the Tembien by the projected assault on Hauzien. The army of Ras Immeru (about 30,000) facing the right of the Italian lines in the direction of Axum, completed the Abyssinian lines on the northern front.

The first battle of the Tembien had upset Ras Kassa's plans for an offensive, with grave consequences in the Abyssinian camp. It was therefore

presumed that the heavy casualties sustained, the exhaustion of munitions, and the non-arrival of the reinforcements asked for, would compel the forces in the Tembien to remain strictly on the defensive for some time to come.

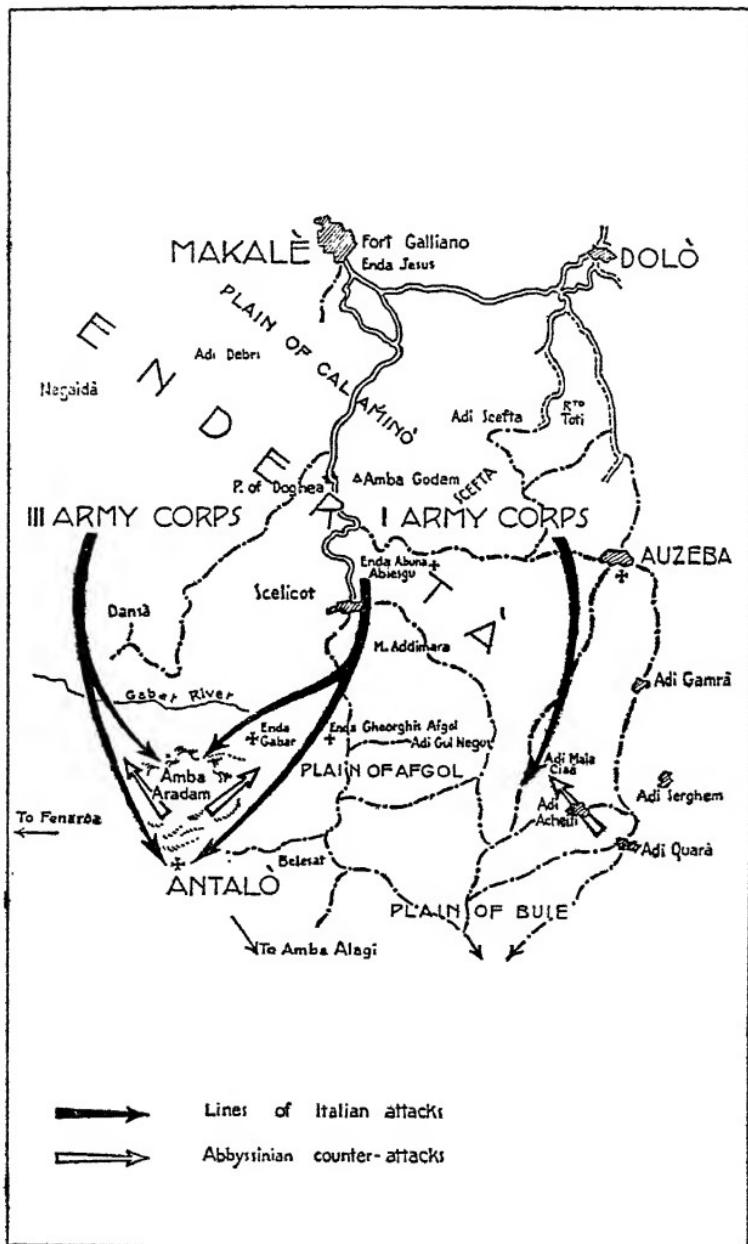
The Italian Command was thus able to turn its attention against the stronger forces to the south of Makalè which with some 30,000 men had fortified the formidable mass of the Amba Aradam so as to protect the concentration of the main body of their army in the Maara-Buie zone and their communications leading to the Makalè-Tembien front from the centre of Ethiopia. During the first ten days of February the reorganization of the supply services had been completed so as to ensure freedom of movement to the Italian forces in the operations to be undertaken. The troops had also been reorganized in five army corps (four Italian and one Native) and were ready to take the field again.

The first phase of the new offensive began on Feb. 10th and the three successive battles—Endertà, the second battle of the Tembien and the battle of the Shirè—resulted during the following three weeks in the annihilation of four Abyssinian armies and the collapse of the whole of the northern Ethiopian front.

The Battle of Endertà.

About 12 miles south of Makalè rises the mountainous mass of Amba Aradam, between the Gabat River to the north and the Maara plain to the south. Steep and rugged (the highest crest rises to a height

Battle of Endertà and Amba Aradam



of over 6,000 ft.), broken by numerous hollows, fissures and ravines which offered excellent cover from artillery fire and air attack, the Amba Aradam is a gigantic defensive barrier, six miles along and three wide. This position gave to the force holding it the command of all the communications leading from the barrier of Amba Alagi (Alagi Pass, Falaga Hill and Togora Hill) through Endertà to Makalè, as well as those leading from Sokota across the Seloa to Tembien. It was therefore necessary to put the defenders of the Amba Aradam out of action and if possible to defeat Ras Mulughieta's army before the main body in the Tembien had time to strike.

Owing to the configuration of the ground, the few tracks leading directly from the Italian positions at Makalè to Amba Aradam gave the defenders overwhelming advantages, so the Italian High Command decided to carry out simultaneous attacks on both flanks. The I Army Corps ('Sabauda' and '3rd January' Divisions and 'Montagna' Blackshirt Group) was ordered to begin by making a feint of outflanking the enemy position from the east ; as soon as the enemy was seen to be moving his forces from that direction, the III Army Corps ('Sila' and '3rd March' Divisions) in its turn executed a rapid outflanking movement from the west. This was to be covered on the extreme right by Native cavalry, while the Endertà Bands—i.e. Dejiak Gugsa's Bands—were to guard the Zalkaba plain. A large number of batteries of artillery were to take up positions to support the advance of the two columns.

This was clearly a vast and intricate plan of

campaign, capable of further strategic developments, constituting a converging manœuvre of two independent forces, both acting however in close co-operation. Besides aiming at the occupation of a territorial objective—the Amba Aradam—it was also directed to the main objective of all warlike operations: the annihilation of the enemy forces. The speed and energy with which this scheme was executed was worthy of the brilliance of its conception.

The battle may be divided into two quite distinct periods, Feb. 10th–12th and Feb. 15th, separated by a pause of two days in the advance (13th and 14th), to establish contacts between the two forces and to move forward artillery and supply services. On Feb. 10th the two Army Corps, I and III, were concentrated at their respective points of departure on the northern slopes of the Gabat out of view of the enemy. On the following day, Feb. 11th, while the III Corps remained in position so as to safeguard the right flank of the Italian line and also to mislead the enemy with regard to the actual direction of the attack, the I Army Corps ('Sabauda' Division on the left and '3rd January' on the right) made a first attack on the heights immediately to the south of Gabat, reaching the front Adi-Asmebu-Enda Mariam Meri Miti-Mount Addimara-Taga, and at the same time establishing defensive posts to obviate any danger of an enemy advance from the eastern plains.

On the same day, Feb. 11th, two reserve units: the 'Pusteria' Alpine Division and the 'Assietta'

Division, reached respectively the Doghe Pass and the positions left by the '3rd January', while the Corps artillery also moved up in support. The Abyssinians, surprised and uncertain as to the real intentions of the Italians, made no resistance, contenting themselves with concentrating large forces on the north-eastern slopes of the Amba Aradam, so as to threaten the right flank of the Italian left column.

On Feb. 12th the advance was resumed along the whole front. The I Corps occupied the heights dominating the Buie basin, Adi Serghem-Adi Akelai (46th Infantry Regiment), Enda Taclè Aimanot (3rd Bersaglieri), Enda Gaber ('3rd January' Division). The III Corps, after crossing the Gabat ('Sila' Division in the first line and '23rd March' in the second line) climbed the north-eastern slopes of the Amba Aradam. The enemy launched repeated attacks against the right wing of the I Corps. Large masses, supported by small calibre artillery and animated by a fine fighting spirit, assaulted the Italian positions at Enda Gaber but the stubborn resistance of the 101st Legion of the Blackshirts and the 'Saluzzo' Alpini Battalion (promptly despatched as reinforcements) succeeded in resisting the attack. On the III Corps front also repeated attacks were made but could not stem the advance. Well supported by Divisional and Corps artillery, the 'Sila' Division by the afternoon reached all the objectives assigned it. Towards dusk, another reserve unit (1st Native Division) moved forward towards the Doghe Pass, halting in such a

position as to be able to operate in any direction. The advance was suspended on the 13th and 14th ; the positions occupied were consolidated, artillery and supply services moved forward, and communications improved.

On the 13th, two enemy attacks on the inner flanks of the I and III Army Corps were repulsed. The 14th passed in perfect quiet. On the 15th the action was resumed and ended in the complete collapse of the Abyssinian resistance.

The Capture of Amba Aradam.

On Feb. 12th the preparatory period of the great battle closed ; on the evening of the 13th, the Italian High Command gave orders for the columns to complete the encirclement of Amba Aradam by the 15th. At 7 a.m. on that day they advanced under the cover of a mist without encountering resistance, but as soon as it dispersed the enemy put up a stout fight along the whole front. They repeatedly attacked the inner flanks of the I and III Corps, but the outer had a quieter time, while the artillery maintained a heavy fire entirely disorganizing the Abyssinian forces. The two columns established contact in the afternoon in the Antalo zone, completing the encirclement of the enemy position, while a company of the '23rd March' Black-shirts gained the peak of the Amba Aradam and ran up the tricolour. Surprised by the rapid advance of the Italian army, Ras Mulughieta's forces which had suffered severe losses in the desperate defence of

the Amba Aradam, dispersed in disorderly flight along the Fenaroa and Amba Alagi routes, unceasingly pursued and fired on by squadrons of aircraft.

The battle of the Endertà was won; the Abyssinians had lost about 20,000 men, of whom over 5,000 were killed, and they left an immense quantity of arms, munitions, transport animals, food stores and war material on the field.

Considering the severity of the fighting, the Italian losses were not serious: Officers, 12 killed and 24 wounded; white troops: 122 killed and 499 wounded; Native troops: 62 killed and 83 wounded, including those belonging to the Ras Gugsa Bands.

Artillery and aircraft played an important part in this battle. The Division and Army Corps artillery, in close touch with the infantry, lent speedy and effective support whenever it was seen to be necessary. The field artillery was ably handled and its well directed fire was of great value at certain critical moments. The Air Force did not spare itself and carried out tactical and strategical reconnaissance, direct action by bombing or machine-gun fire from low altitudes, and the pursuit of the enemy. At some moments as many as 150 machines were in action at once.

The battle of Endertà offers a striking example of the conduct of a war of 'movement': it is indeed the first great practical example of the new theories that have been worked out since the Great War. They are a natural reaction from the slow and static 'war of positions' which was wasteful of life and resources and was so largely responsible for prolonging the conflict. Endertà was a triumph of manœuvre. It started

on Feb. 11th with the feint of the Italian left wing so as to mislead the enemy and induce him to move the main force of his army in the direction threatened. It developed on the 12th with the advance of the Italian right wing and simultaneous renewed movement of the left; it was consolidated on the 13th and 14th by bringing up the artillery and supply services in preparation for the final attack, and ended on the 15th with the rapid advance of the right wing, which succeeded in outflanking the unsuspecting left wing of the Abyssinians, and the junction of the Italian columns beyond the principal objective: the Amba Aradam.

Chapter Nine

THE SECOND BATTLE OF TEMBIEN AND THE BATTLE OF SHIRÈ

The capture of the mountain fortress of the Amba Aradam and the rout of the strongest and best armed Ethiopian Army on the northern front prepared the way for fresh operations in Tembien. With this aim in view, while the I Army Corps gained the Mount Gomoloh-Aderat-Mount Garajam front, between Feb. 17th and 20th the III Army Corps marched across rough and difficult country to the Gaela basin and reached the Taraghe Pass.

Meanwhile preparations were hurriedly pushed forward for the new battle which, according to the High Command's plan of campaign, had for its objectives: first, to secure possession of the Alagi Passes (Alagi, Falagah, and Togorah), so as to prevent any renewal of the offensive, unlikely as this seemed after the collapse of Ras Mulughieta's army, and above all to prevent it from retiring into the Tembien; secondly, to defeat the Tembien Armies, attacking them simultaneously from the north (I Native Army Corps) and south (III Army Corps), and enveloping them in a circle of steel and fire. The second battle of Tembien began on Feb. 22nd and ended on March 1st by a fresh and crushing victory for the Italians.

After providing for the organization of its supply

services, the I Army Corps, on the morning of Feb. 27th moved southward from the Aderat basin in three columns:

Left Column, across Mai Betoh-Adi Abeitoh-Amba Maira-Bet Maira, on the Falagah hill;

Right Column, across Mount Gutba Hairiat-Amba Corcorah-Amba Togorah, on the Togorah Hill;

Central Column, through Mai Meshik on to the Alagi Pass.

The lateral columns marched more rapidly, so as to deal with any resistance and clear the way for the advance of the central column. The operation was carried out in two days as arranged and at 11 a.m. on Feb. 28th the tricolour floated on the crest of the Amba Alagi, which forty years earlier had witnessed the heroic self-sacrifice of Toselli and his men.

While the I Army Corps was marching on Amba Alagi (Feb. 28th-28th), the fighting in the Tembien was renewed with great violence. All the preparatory movements for this fresh battle were completed by the evening of Feb. 28th. The III Army Corps advanced from south to north towards the Gheva, and the front line positions in the north were reinforced by the Native Army Corps. Ras Kassa's and Ras Seyum's forces, somewhat diminished by the successive defection of small groups, numbered at the commencement of the battle about 30,000 men. To be ready for all eventualities, these were divided into three forces, between Debra Amba (northern front), Amba Tzellere (southern front), and Melfà (eastern front). It should be noted that the five Army Corps

had been reorganized by the High Command so that each of them, including the Native, comprised units of the Regular Army, the Blackshirts and Askari.

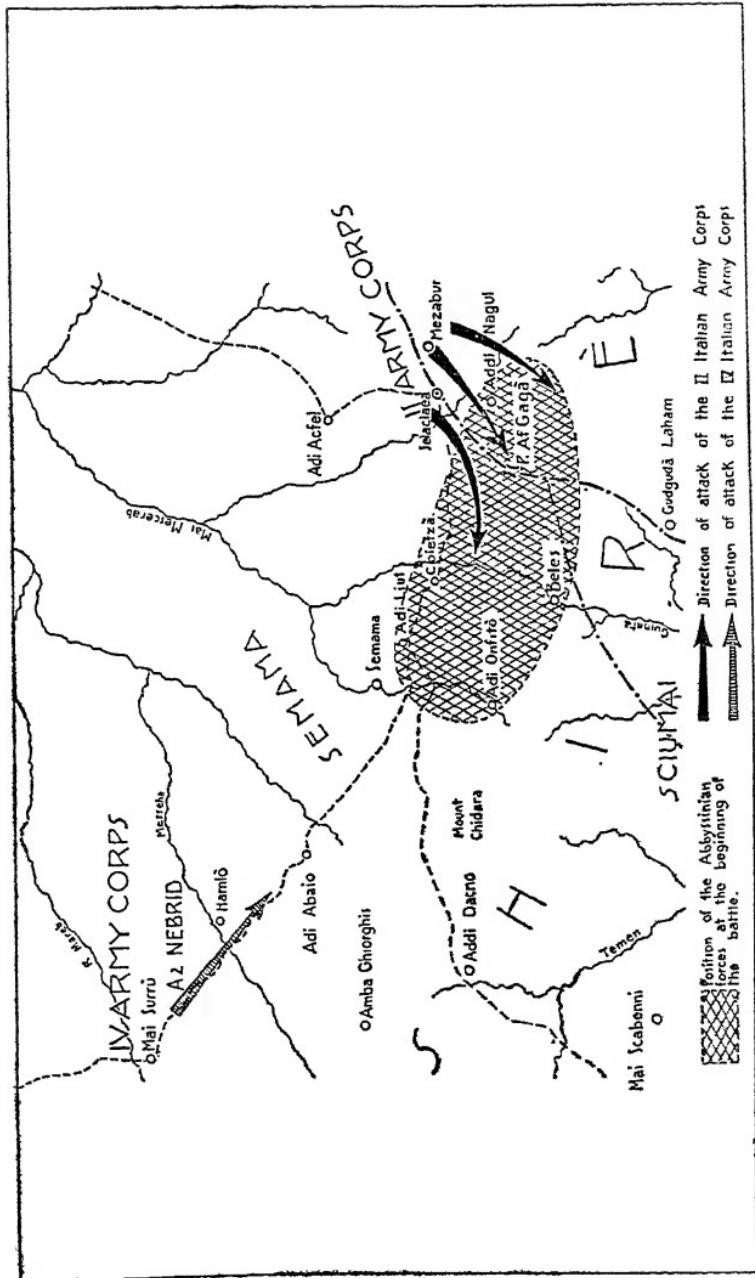
In the early hours of the 27th, a platoon of Alpini and a handful of Blackshirts of the Native Army Corps, by a hazardous climb took the Work Amba (Golden Amba) by surprise, at the same time capturing a big gun placed there. The enemy replied with repeated and violent counter-attacks, causing heavy casualties on both sides, but the *amba* remained in Italian possession. Meanwhile, the III Army Corps, having crossed the Gheva, reached the Dibbuk zone without meeting any resistance. On the following day, Feb. 28th, the Native Army Corps after some fighting gained the western slopes of the Debra Amba, while the III from the south, invested the Amba Tzellere. On the 29th, the two Army Corps resumed the action and met west of Abbi Addi, surrounding the remains of the armies of Ras Kassa and Ras Seyum.

On March 1st the Italians completed the occupation of Amba Tzellere and disposed of the last enemy forces. The Tembien was entirely in Italian hands. The surviving Abyssinians abandoned rifles, machine guns, animals and stores and took to flight, pursued and decimated by aeroplane attacks.

The Battle of Shirè.

The third and concluding stage of these operations took place in the Shirè region and ended in the defeat of Ras Immeru's army. This had been

Battle of Shire



reinforced by the Ayaleu Burru contingent, some 30,000 strong; it faced the positions occupied by the Italian II Army Corps south-west of Axum, and had repeatedly attempted to break through the right wing of the Italian lines on the northern front. The newly constituted IV Army Corps ('Cosseria' and '1st February' Divisions) had reached the Debra Mariam zone (north of the Mareb); the II Army Corps ('Gavinana', 'Gran Sasso,' and '21st April' Divisions) received orders to prepare for an advance while leaving sufficient force for the defence of the fortified positions. The plan of the High Command was that the IV Army Corps should attack from the north and the II from the east so as to surround the army in the Shirè and liberate the whole of the Western Tigrè. In pursuance of this plan, on Feb. 29th the II Army Corps was to march on Selaklala, while the IV, after crossing the Mareb, was to gain Az Nebrid. On March 1st, the II Army Corps was to reach Koyetza and the IV, Az Daroh.

In the early hours of Feb. 29th, the two Army Corps began the advance. The IV did not meet with any resistance, but had to overcome great difficulties owing to the nature of the terrain and scarcity of water and in the evening it halted north of Az Nebrid. The II Corps, on the contrary, was attacked towards 1 p.m. by considerable hostile forces. The battle was fiercely contested and lasted till dusk, the enemy being repulsed at all points. During the night, it was decided that the 'Gran Sasso' Division should take up its position on the right of the 'Gavinana' and plans for a fresh attack were drawn

up. On March 1st, while the IV Army Corps continued its arduous march across arid and unexplored country, reaching the zone between Ad Nebrid and Az Daroh, the II Corps repulsed further attacks directed against the flanks of the Italian lines. By the evening, there were still large numbers of Abyssinians in the Koietza zone, but they showed the first signs of their intention to fall back.

On March 2nd, however, on the Italian advance being resumed in both directions (north-south and east-west) the Abyssinians made repeated attacks on the II Army Corps, which repulsed them at all points, while heavy artillery fire obviously weakened the Abyssinian morale. At dawn on March 3rd the two Army Corps were rapidly closing in, and the Abyssinians, shaken by fierce fighting with the troops of the II Corps, and seriously menaced by the advance of the IV, abandoned the action and retreated towards the Takazzè, pursued and harassed by aircraft.

The battle of Shirè ended with an Italian victory, the last Abyssinian army on the northern front had been wiped out. In the two battles of Tembien and Shirè, they lost over 15,000 men, killed and wounded. The Italian losses were: officers, 19 killed and 67 wounded; white troops, 236 killed, 731 wounded, 22 missing; native troops, 36 killed, 149 wounded, 13 missing.

Organization of the Supply Services.

Apart from the brilliance of its strategical conception and promptness of tactical execution, the

great scheme of operations which has been briefly described may be considered the most extensive military operations ever carried out in the history of colonial warfare. It owed its success in large measure to the far-seeing and careful organization of the supply services. In order to realize the size and complexity of their task, it should be remembered—

(1) that a force of five Army Corps had to be fed, armed and equipped according to modern standards, in a barren, mountainous region, at a distance of 3,000 miles from Italy and over 300 miles from the coast;

(2) that this army of five Corps, operating in different directions on a front of about 210 miles, was augmented by the employment of a formidable mass of artillery of all calibres, hundreds of armoured cars, and great squadrons of aeroplanes;

(3) that two entire Army Corps (the III and IV) had to receive all supplies, for a brief period, entirely by air; and one of them, the III, changed the line of its communications twice in the course of operations;

(4) that in addition to the revictualling of the troops, the Italians had to provide for the population of the occupied territories, reduced to the most wretched conditions by the raids and pillage of the Ethiopian armies.

The few data and figures that follow give a better idea than any description of the gigantic effort involved throughout the three battles of the Tigrè, without allowing any slackening in the normal flow of supplies, or suspending the execution of works in

the rear. These latter comprised the construction of defensive works, the digging of wells, and the building and equipping of roads and camps.

To ensure supplies, temporary depots were established immediately behind the front line. Great quantities of war material and stores were concentrated by the Army Supply Services close to the Adigrat centre and the advanced bases of Hauzien and Mai Macdem. Ample stores were at the same time brought up to the rear depots and storehouses in Eritrea, so as to be able to make good from relatively short distances the material consumed during the battles.

Medical Service.

Each division had its own medical section and two field hospitals, and a surgical unit was attached to each of the Army Corps. A hospital with 400 beds and an operating theatre was established at Quiha to which sick and wounded were evacuated by the ambulance service of the Army Corps. Another hospital with a special mobile operating theatre was set up in the rear at Mai Macdem with an aggregate capacity for 1,000 wounded. A third hospital and operating theatre with accommodation for some 400 men were established at Adigrat. Wounded and sick were evacuated to Quiha, where they were fed and had their wounds re-dressed. When necessary surgical operations were performed and then, if the men were fit to be removed, they were sent on to Mai Macdem. Here patients were kept for a longer period, and then sent to Adigrat. At Adigrat they

were kept in hospital or evacuated in the normal way.

Commissariat Service.

500 tons of flour, 40 tons of frozen meat, 150,000 tins of milk, 4,000 hectolitres of wine, 90 tons of jam, 45 tons of dried fruit, 34,000 lb. of tobacco, 150,000 bottles of mineral waters, 500,000 tins of meat and soup and 120 tons of biscuits were forwarded daily to the front, for revictualling the troops. In addition to the stocks of clothing and equipment already held in the advance depots, the following supplies were among those furnished: 30,000 linen uniforms, 50,000 pairs of boots, 30,000 linen shirts, 50,000 tents.

Ordnance Service.

During the first two weeks of February alone, the advance batteries in the front line were sent some scores of guns, several thousand light arms, about 200,000 shells, 22 million small arm cartridges, and some tens of thousands of bombs. The total weight of the material carried for the supply of the artillery alone amounted to 3,800 metric tons, and employed about one thousand average-load lorries for the transport.

The Work of the Engineers.

The work of the Engineers during the campaign, and especially during the period of the operations just described, was remarkable both in extent and in variety. They were responsible in the first place

for the fortification of a number of important positions in sectors where offensive action was not contemplated. They organized the attack positions occupied during the renewal of the offensive so as to make them ready for all emergencies and constructed defences for the new positions conquered. In addition it was necessary for several weeks to organize the transport of 300 tons of Engineers' stores every day to the front line. A number of powerful searchlights were brought up by lorry or on camels, and every night their beams swept over the wild tangle of mountains and valleys in front of the Italian lines.

Meanwhile, the Sappers were busy improving the scanty tracks already existing, or constructing new motor-roads. Special mention should be made of the road up the precipitous southern slopes of the deep Gabet valley on account of its severe gradients, the difficulties encountered and the speed with which the work was completed. This network of roads made it possible for large units advancing in the vast Buia plain to be followed by their mechanized columns. Undaunted by the difficulties of the mountainous country, the Engineers rendered equally valuable service by installing numerous and varied means of communication and contact.

The water supply was a serious problem, demanding the greatest foresight and measures of every kind to secure an abundant supply of drinking water for troops at all times and in all localities. This entailed heavy and most complicated work in procuring, filtering and distributing the requisite quantities, while

laying up sufficient reserve stocks. Norton Wells were distributed to the various departments of the Engineers' corps concerned, besides motor pumps, hand pumps, piping, portable filters, metal tanks of varying capacity up to 2,625 gallons, and small tanks to be carried by mules.

The whole of these duties and the maintenance of supplies had to be carried out without interrupting the regular activities of the Engineers throughout the colony of Eritrea (construction of roads, huts, furnaces, etc.): a formidable undertaking necessitating an aggregate movement of over 5,000 tons of material daily and the labour of tens of thousands of civilian workmen.

Transport Service.

In view of the great complexity of the work of the supply services, the demands on transport assumed huge proportions and all means from aeroplanes and lorries to mules and camels were pressed into the service. Over 900 lorries were assigned to the transport of arms and munitions. An entire division was conveyed without accident in one column of 650 lorries from Massawa to Adigrat in 18 hours and, afterwards, in 10 hours from Adigrat to Makalè. All the stores of another division were transported from the Enticho sector to Makalè in 24 hours by a single column of 120 lorries. Wherever motor traction was impossible, resort was had to pack animals and 6,000 camels and 4,000 mules were employed, in addition to the animals allocated to the several units.

These figures will show the magnitude of the

organization required during the most active period of operations, from Feb. 10th to March 3rd, and affords a clear and useful example of the effort required at the present day to carry out colonial operations with large armies.

Operations in Somalia.

After the victory gained in January by General Graziani's troops in the Neghelli zone, no large scale operations were undertaken during the month of February on the Somalia front. The Italians were employed in the consolidation and organization of the territory occupied between the Ganale Doria and the Dawa Parma, combing the entire region in a series of reconnaissances by mechanized columns. Among these, mention should be made of the reconnaissance of a column which, leaving Buccurale in the beginning of February, routed the Lamashillindi guard on the Webi Gestro, occupied that village, and captured huge stores of grain. Another column, carrying out a reconnaissance along the Dawa Parma encountered in the vicinity of Malka Guba a strong force of Abyssinians, which it defeated after a fierce fight.

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Chapter Ten

THE OCCUPATION OF AUSSA, THE ADVANCE TO GONDAR, THE BATTLE OF LAKE ASHANGI

The campaign in the Tigrè, which included the battles of Endertà, Tembien, and Shirè, ended on March 3rd with the defeat of the last remaining enemy forces in that province. The Abyssinian front of over 80 miles which had been held by 150,000 men, had collapsed and as a result of the successive victories, the way lay open for an Italian advance into the centre of Abyssinia. While the various Army Corps were engaged in the organization of the captured positions, the Engineers and gangs of civilian workmen were working feverishly on the construction of new roads and the supply services were rushing up stores of food and munitions and establishing fresh depots.

The pause was not of long duration; with each successive victory the time needed for the preparation of a fresh offensive became less. On March 10th, only seven days after the battle of Shirè, a bridge 80 feet in length had been built across the Takazzè, the roads were ready, and the High Command ordered a general advance towards the ~~Amhara~~ regions of Lasta and Aussa.

The operations between March 10th and April 4th had as their objectives the destruction of the remaining enemy forces on the northern front and the

occupation of the whole of northern Ethiopia from the Sudanese frontier to the Red Sea, along the Lake Tana-Ashangi-Aussa line. The concluding stages of the campaign consisted of the occupation of the Aussa province, the advance on Sokota and Gondar, and the battle of Lake Ashangi.

Throughout this period the Air Force gave proof of its strategic and tactical ability. Among other achievements, it destroyed six enemy planes between March 18th and April 4th, two south of Quoram (near Lake Ashangi), two at Dabat (north-east of Gondar), and two on the aerodrome of Addis Ababa. With the loss of these six planes, the tiny Abyssinian air force—used mainly for air liaison between G.H.Q. and the capital—virtually ceased to exist.

The Occupation of Aussa.

The preparations for an advance from the coast of the Red Sea to Aussa had been begun in December. The problems which had to be faced were many and difficult, for the success of the expedition depended on the most careful organization of the supply services. Numerous air reconnaissances were carried out in order to discover what use could be made of aircraft, and the existence of any level ground on which they could land.

It was essential that the force should be light, mobile and as far as possible unencumbered with baggage as it had to cross some 120 miles of inhospitable, stony desert covered with basaltic slabs and broken by mounds and craters of lava. At the same

time it had to be sufficiently strong to beat off any attacks by lurking bodies of the enemy.

Two columns left their respective bases of Assab and Beilul, and having affected a junction, proceeded to the Dankalia frontier which they crossed close to Mussa Ali, immediately plunging into the treacherous and torrid desert. The force was escorted by 25 aeroplanes which besides dropping supplies of munitions, food, forage, and water, obviated the danger of ambushes. This points to a new use of the air arm; in addition to reconnaissance work, liaison, direct intervention in battle, pursuit, replenishment of supplies, the air arm proved its value for the protection of troops, both on the march and when halted.

During this tiring and difficult march, the aeroplanes acted as scouts, in advance, on both flanks and in the rear of the column. They communicated with the General in command by wireless and code signals and whenever Abyssinian troops or brigands were observed, the aircraft broke up the enemy concentrations with machine-gun fire. No less than 97 successful landings were made in the course of this march despite the roughness of the ground.

On March 11th the Italians reached and occupied Sardo, close to the Awask River, in the heart of the Aussa. The military importance of this was obvious from the threat it represented both to the ~~Gibuti~~ Addis Ababa railway line and to the communications of the enemy in the Quoram zone, close to Lake Ashangi. The aerodrome which was immediately constructed at Sardo is a little more than 150 miles

by air from Diredawa and only 120 miles from Dessiè, so air communication between the armies on the two fronts became possible.

The Advance on Sokota and Gondar.

While the march on Sardo was in progress, troops were moving south from the Setit and the Takazzè between March 10th and 20th, so that on the whole northern front from the Sudan to the Red Sea, a simultaneous advance in several parallel columns was taking place. The force in the western lowlands after crossing the Setit occupied Kafta, Birkutan and Wolkait. The II Army Corps, having crossed the Takazzè and scattered the last remnants of Ras Immeru's army, advanced across the Tzellemti and along the western side of the unexplored Semien mountains, the highest range in Abyssinia. Despite the difficulties of the terrain it reached Febereck, the principal centre of the Woghera, on March 29th.

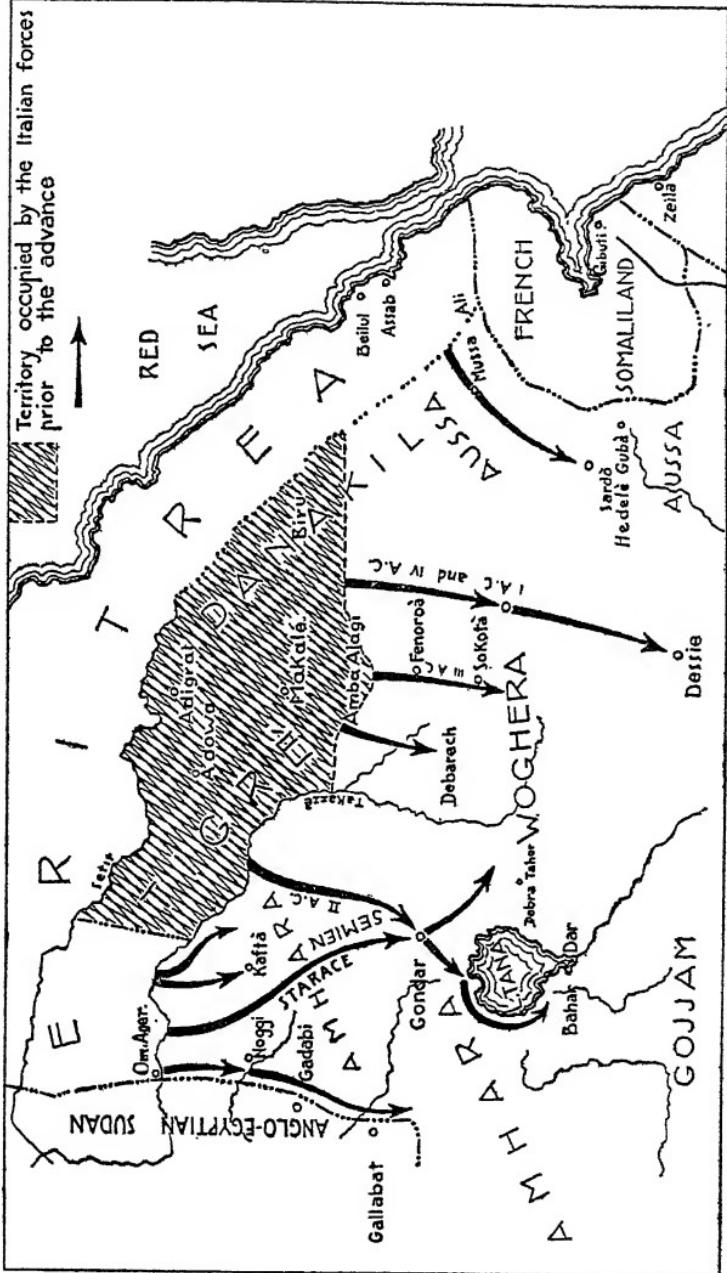
At the same time the III Army Corps, moving from the Fenaroa zone across the fords of the Samre and Tzellerai after an exhausting march reached Sokota, an important caravan junction and the centre of communications with Lake Tana and the Gojjam.

One incident of this march calls for special mention. Some parts of the track to Sokota were so rough that it was impossible for lorries to follow the column and the pack animals being engaged in transporting munitions, the troops were obliged to carry their food themselves. Two shifts of 2,000 men each, conveyed in two days over a distance of 27 miles an aggregate load of 60 tons, meaning an addi-

tional load per man of about 66 lbs. besides his arms and equipment.

Between March 29th and 31st a column of native troops, under the command of General Cubeddu, pushed on from Debareck to Dacua and Dabat and on April 1st reached Gondar, after joining up with a column under the command of Lieut.-General of the Fascist Militia Achille Starace. This consisted entirely of mechanized troops—3rd Regt. Bersaglieri, 'Benito Mussolini' Blackshirt battalion, batteries of mechanized artillery, 1 battalion of mechanized machine guns, a squadron of armoured cars, a mixed detachment of Engineers and various units of other Services—in all, about 5,000 men with 500 motor lorries, etc. It set out from Asmara on March 15th and reached Om Ager on the Setit on the 19th. Organized in such a way as to render it entirely independent as regards supplies for about 30 days, the column resumed its march at dawn on the 20th. After crossing the Setit it advanced into Ethiopian territory along a caravan route which had never before been used by wheeled vehicles, through practically unknown country. After covering 220 miles in 12 days, and overcoming all manner of obstacles, it occupied Gondar on April 1st. The movement converging on Gondar had thus been carried out along both sides of the Semien mountain range, the Starace column from the west, the Cubeddu column from the east. A third column meanwhile, proceeding from Nogara along the Sudanese frontier, reached Rafi on the Angareb River.

Advance to Gondar and Lake Tana



The survivors of the armies of Ras Immeru and Dejiak Aialeu Burru, winding their way between the Semien and Woghera, did not dare to attack the columns and owing to the hostility of the local population, fled towards the south.

The Battle of Lake Ashangi.

After the capture of Amba Alagi the Native Army Corps occupied positions south of that massif and were engaged in the making of roads to link up the Italian communications with the so-called Imperial Road, which starts from Mai Cheu. The remnants of Ras Mulughieta's, Ras Kassa's and Ras Seyum's armies continued their precipitate flight southward.

Confirmation was obtained of the rumour that the Negus in person was gathering a large force (between 40,000 and 60,000 men) between Lake Ashangi and Quoram, to oppose the further advance of the Italian troops. This army was said to include the Imperial Guard—who were armed, equipped and trained according to European standards—and also the survivors of the armies which had been defeated in Endertà and Tembien. It was expected that these forces would stand on the defensive, but during the last days of March air observation and the questioning of prisoners and deserters, made it clear that the Negus had decided to take the offensive and was preparing to attack. It seemed likely that he was induced to take this desperate step by the threat to the flanks and rear of his troops, the result of the Italian occupation of Sokota and Sardo. He

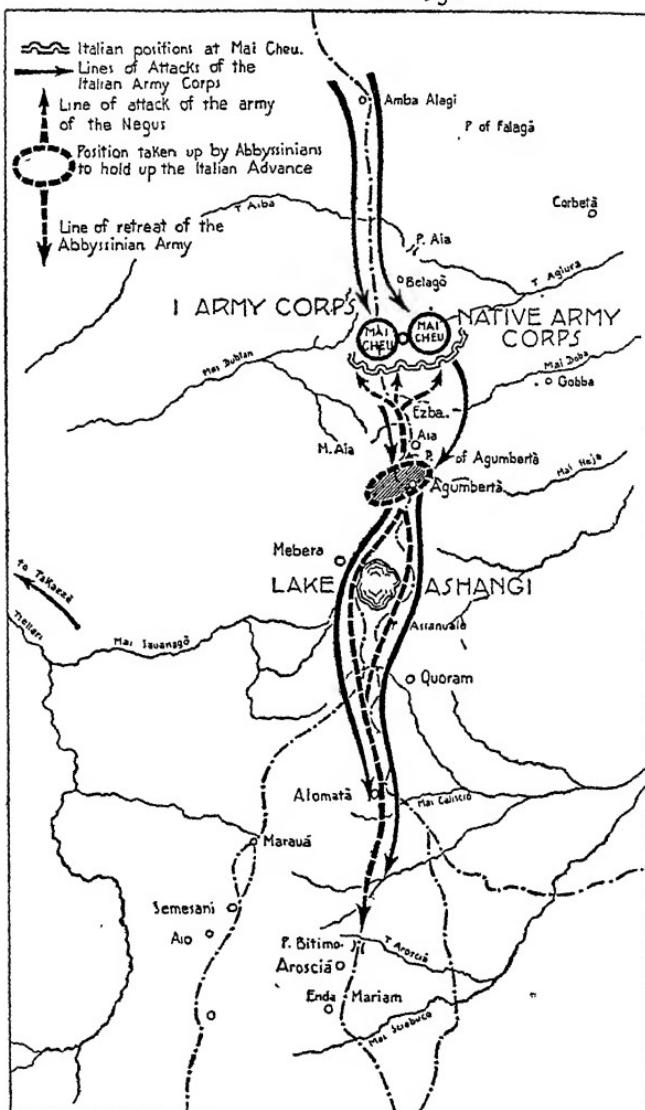
may also have hoped to surprise the Italians while they were reorganizing their forces.

On the receipt of this information the High Command took the necessary measures to meet the impending offensive. The I (Santini) Army Corps and the Native Army Corps were ordered to take up positions on the right wing, so as to be ready to undertake a counter offensive while meeting the first attack with heavy artillery fire.

The terrain lying between Mai Cheu and the Ezba Pass differed considerably from that of the earlier Tigrè battles, recalling in some aspects (parallel mountain ridges, deep valleys and woods) the characteristics of the Alps. The Italians occupied the heights north of the Mekan torrent, between Mount Bohorà and Mount Korbeta: the I Army Corps to the right, between Mount Bohora and the Mekan Pass, 'Pusteria' Division and 8th Group Native battalions in the first line; 'Sabauda' and '3rd January' Divisions and 6th Group Blackshirts in the second line; 'Assietta' Division in reserve; the Native Army Corps on the left, between the Mekan Pass and Mount Korbeta, 1st and 2nd Native Divisions in the first line.

The battle began with fierce fighting at dawn on March 31st with an enemy attack on the right of the Alpini Division, and ended on the morning of April 4th with the complete defeat of the Negus's Army. The first enemy thrust was directed, at about 6 a.m. on March 31st, against the Italian lines on Mount Bohora, which were strongly held by the Alpini of the 'Pusteria' Division. Its objective was to break

Battle of Lake Ashangi.



the right wing, but this was foiled by the stout resistance of the Alpini battalions.

A later attack, supported by 40 guns of small calibre and numbers of mortars, was launched close to the Mekan Pass against the 8th Native Group, the junction of the two Army Corps. The fighting spread from the right wing to the centre, increasing in intensity and violence, but the Abyssinians were driven back with heavy losses. About 2 p.m. the Native troops counter-attacked between the Mekan Pass and Mount Korbeta, and though they were met with well directed artillery and machine gun fire, they succeeded in advancing into the valley of the Mekan torrent, thus relieving the pressure against the right wing and centre. About 4 p.m. fresh Abyssinian troops hurled themselves against the Native Army Corps in the direction of Mount Korbeta, other columns renewed the attack against the Alpini on Mount Bohara, and the fighting broke out afresh along the whole front.

This was the greatest of all the enemy efforts and the turning point of the battle, but despite their desperate courage and the violence of the attack the Abyssinians were unable to gain any ground. From Mount Bohara to Mount Korbeta, Alpini and Askari rivalled each other in bravery, they repulsed every assault and counter-attacked unceasingly. Fierce hand-to-hand fighting took place and the Italian artillery was compelled to stop firing on the attacking columns so as to avoid the risk of hitting its own troops, and concentrated on the hostile batteries which were soon silenced.

About 5 p.m. the fury of the attack died down; the Abyssinians were exhausted and a charge by the Alpini forced them back to the village of Saefti. Repulsed at every point, shattered by artillery fire and mown down by machine-guns, constantly charged with the bayonet and hammered by aircraft—which took an active part in the battle and had many machines hit—the Abyssinians abandoned the struggle and about 6 p.m. retreated to their earlier positions south of Mekan. By the evening of the first day, the Negus's army was beaten. Over 7,000 dead including many chiefs were left on the field, a great number of prisoners were captured, as well as a large quantity of arms.

On April 1st, so as to cover the beginning of the retreat, the enemy attempted a fresh attack between the Kekan torrent and the village of Safti, but this was repulsed by artillery fire. Strong rearguard forces still occupied the heights of the Mekan and the High Command ordered a counter-offensive, in which the two Army Corps were to advance simultaneously. At dawn on the 3rd, while the Native Army Corps threatened the right of the enemy positions, the I Army Corps ('Pusteria' and 'Sabauda' Divisions in the first line) captured the Ezba Pass and virtually wiped out the rearguard.

The enemy, overwhelmed by the fire of artillery of medium calibre (which had been moved up to the heights north of the Mekan torrent on April 2nd) and attacked without respite by Alpini and infantry, relinquished the fight and retired in disorder towards Lake Ashangi; by dawn on the 4th, the retreat had

degenerated into a rout. The Negus's army had ceased to exist and the wretched survivors were pursued and bombed by aircraft.

It was impossible to estimate the Abyssinian casualties, but they certainly amounted to many thousands; 500 prisoners, 18 guns, 1 mortar, 43 machine guns, 1,500 rifles, 1 motor car, 11 lorries, numerous cases of ammunition and material were captured. Italian casualties between March 31st and April 4th were:—70 Officers (21 killed and 49 wounded); Italian soldiers 355 (86 killed and 269 wounded); Askari 873 (204 killed and 669 wounded).

Southern Front.

During March great activity prevailed on the Southern front in preparation for a fresh advance, and the civil organization of the occupied territories was taken in hand. The latter included the establishment of the Royal Residency of Jarsa in the Digodia territory. The insurrection of the Galla Borana tribes against the Abyssinians was rapidly spreading.

The most difficult problem was that of communications. By unceasing work a number of reinforced concrete bridges were built in a few weeks, one of these being an eight-arch bridge between Bulo Burti and Belet Wen. Road making was hampered by the nature of the soil; up to that time the Italians had made use of the native paths which in dry weather were ankle-deep in dust, while the slightest rain made them impassable to motor lorries. It was therefore necessary to build roads with proper foundations

before the rainy season set in and one hundred and fifty miles were made in twenty days, a feat which had never previously been accomplished. The problem of communications was bound up with that of supplies; the distance from Mogadishu to Gorrahei is 280 miles and each lorry consumed one-third of its total load of petrol before reaching the latter place. Nor was the question of water less serious, involving as it did the transport of hundreds of tanks.

In addition to a number of reconnaissances, the Air Force carried out four important bombing raids on the vital centres of the enemy defence:—Goba, Jig-Jiga, Harar, Bullale.

On March 20th, a squadron of small monomotor bombing planes, starting at dawn from the Neghelli airport, destroyed the base at Goba between Allata and Ghigner. This was situated in a narrow valley at a height of 6,000 ft. in what seemed to be an impregnable position for aircraft, which had already made several attempts to attack it. The bombardment of Goba, besides constituting one of the most daring aerial efforts on the southern front, left the enemy without any base in the western sector.

Only two days after the destruction of Goba, the Air Force carried out an important bombardment in the eastern sector: 27 tri-motors, taking off at dawn from the Gorrahei camp, after making a feint on Harar so as to mislead hostile anti-aircraft, reached and effectively bombed the entrenched camp of Jig-Jiga, destroying barracks, military stores, trenches, munition depots and columns of lorries. On March 25th the destruction of the Jig-Jiga entrenched

camp was completed by a second expedition of 30 planes led personally by General Ranza who commanded the Air Force in Somalia. These two bombardments were a severe blow to the defensive organization of the sector but Harar the chief enemy base, a fortified town with magazines and supply depots, was still intact. On the morning of March 29th 33 planes in the course of a flight of over 850 miles completed the destruction of all the military objectives in Harar.

Aerial activity on the southern front ended on March 30th with the bombardment of the Abyssinian Army's General Headquarters near Bullalè, a large village south of Dagabur; this raid was carried out by 33 planes which flew about 700 miles.

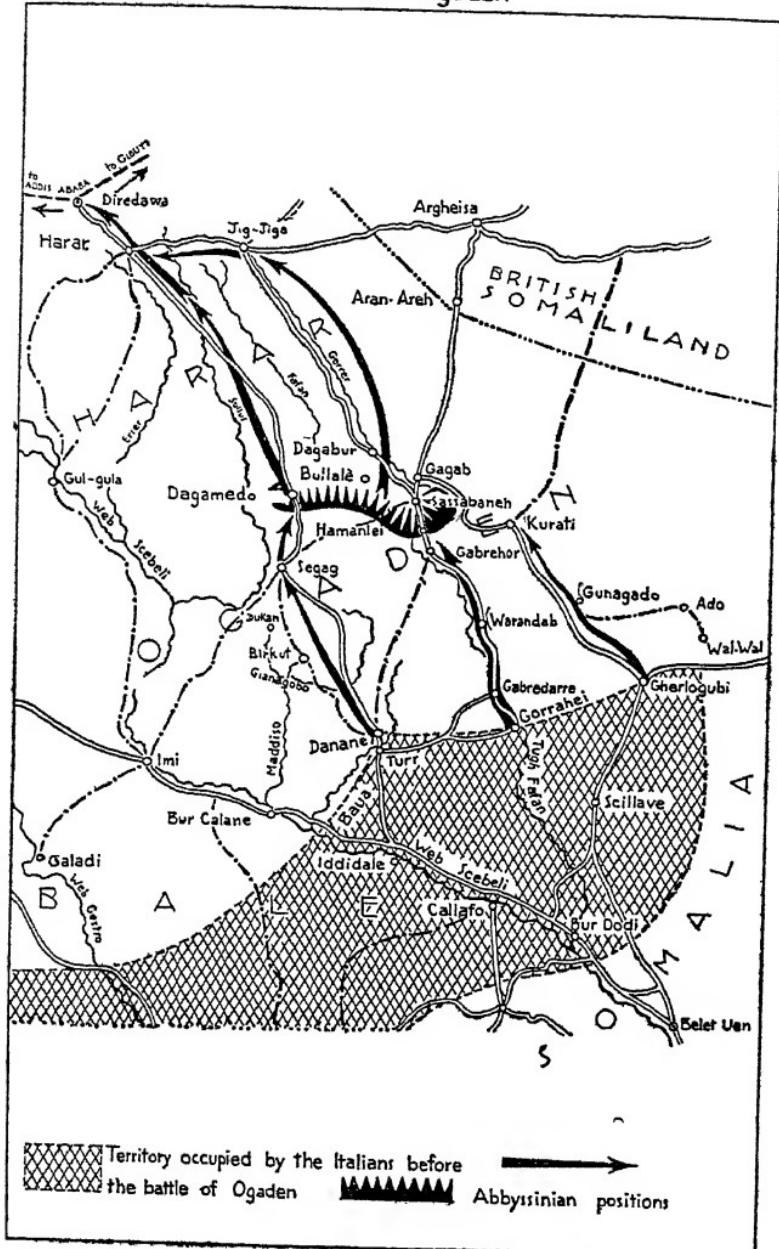
Chapter Eleven

THE ADVANCE TO LAKE TANA AND THE BATTLE OF OGADEN

Gondar having been captured, the Italians proceeded to occupy the rich country around Lake Tana and to secure the control of the communications between that region and Anglo-Egyptian Sudan.

On April 11th a column consisting of one Bersaglieri battalion, one company of Blackshirts, a few Native Bands and one Native battery of mountain artillery left Gondar. After a fatiguing march across the arid Dembla plain the column arrived on the morning of the 12th at the Gorgora peninsula on the northern banks of Lake Tana. At the same time work was begun to convert the old caravan route into a motor road. On the same day (April 12th) a mixed column composed of mechanized detachments, camel corps detachments and fast armoured cars left Noggara and reached the customs post at the Gallabet frontier, an important caravan junction west of the Lake Tana region, close to the Sudan frontier. The column followed the uncertain line of a bridle path for over 100 miles and met with great difficulties owing to the nature of the country. The Abyssinians did not attempt to attack, and the garrison at the frontier post fled towards the south at the first rumour of the Italian approach.

Battle of Ogaden



Allata) a strong hostile force, and promptly closed with them forcing them to retreat after inflicting heavy casualties. The Italians lost 46 officers and men killed and wounded. The fierce resistance offered in the Wadara fight was in itself a sufficient indication of the efficiency of the forces occupying the southern front, of which the Italians had further proof during the course of their victorious Ogaden offensive.

The Battle of Ogaden.

The battle of Ogaden began on April 14th with the advance of the Libya Division from Danane to Birkut, and ended on April 30th with the rout of Dejiak Nasibu's army and the capture of the Sassa-baneh-Bullalè-Dagabur fortified system. The Harar-Ghieh road, as has been said, was barred by Dejiak Nasibu's army, some 30,000 strong, with modern arms and equipment, including machine and a number of heavy guns. Under the leadership of a Turk, Wehib Pasha, General Dejiak Nasibu's Chief-of-Staff, the Upper Ogaden region between Sassa-baneh and Dagabur had been skilfully organized for defence, with shelters and gun emplacements in caves. In addition to the troops ready to offer a stout resistance in the fortified region, the Abyssinians had on the right wing a strong force of several thousands under the orders of Dejiak Abbebe Damtou, the brother of Ras Desta, who had been defeated at Neghelli. This advanced position, on the Janagobo River, some 40 miles west of Gorrahei—the point of departure of the impending Italian offensive—represented a serious

threat on the left flank of the Italian columns. The enemy plan was that these forces should carry out a surprise attack on the important caravan junction at Danane, which they believed to be weakly garrisoned, and thus threaten the Italian communications in the eastern sector, along the Webi Shebeli.

General Graziani, realizing the danger, decided immediately to attack their right wing, with the object of breaking it and of threatening the right of the position with his left wing. He accordingly made the following dispositions :

Left column, commanded by General Nasi, composed of Italian troops (tanks, armoured cars, artillery and Engineers) of the 'Libya' Division, Askari; various Bands of *Dubats*, and the irregular Bands of Olol Dinle and Hussen Aile. Direction of attack:—Danane—Segag—Dagamedo—Dagabur.

Central column, commanded by General Frusci, composed of Italian troops (mechanized machine guns, armoured cars, tanks, artillery and engineers); Arabo-Somali groups, and Bands of *Dubats*. Direction of attack:—Gorrahei—Gabredarre—Sassabaneh—Dagabur.

Right column, commanded by Lieut.-General of the Fascist Militia Agostini, composed of Italian troops (mechanized Royal Carabinieri, 'Forest Militia', and Engineers) and various native Bands (Mudugh, Nogar, and Mijurtina). Direction of attack:—Gherlogubi—Afdub—Kurati—Bullalè—Dagabur.

The three columns, setting out from the long Danane—Gorrahei—Gherlogubi line (about 150 miles

in extent) had orders to shorten their front as they advanced, so as to concentrate, in the first place, on the line, Segag-Gabrehor-Kurati (about 110 miles) and converge in the second stage on Dagarbur.

Notwithstanding the fierce resistance of the Abyssinians, the difficulties of the terrain, and adverse weather conditions, which transformed the water courses into unfordable torrents of mud, the spirit of the Italian troops—both National and Native—made it possible for this well-planned manœuvre to be carried out rapidly and successfully. Operations started on April 14th with the march of the 'Libya' Division on Birkut, which led to the battle of Janakobo against the forces of Abbebe Damtou. After about three days' fierce resistance in which the Abyssinians were favoured by the intricacies of the terrain, their right wing, driven out of the caves after fierce hand-to-hand fighting and in danger of being surrounded, retreated in disorder, suffering very heavy losses.

Meanwhile, the Frusci column reached Warandab, and the Agostini column completed its concentration and held the line between Gherlogubi and Warder. General Graziani placed under General Nasi's orders the mechanized 'Verne' column, to be used to intercept the enemy's retreat, and also General Navarra's Somali storm troops, who were entrusted with the task of combing the Janagobo battlefield. The 'Libya' Division was thus able to reach Birkut on the 19th, overtaking during their rapid march some retreating Abyssinians, who

attacked in a desperate effort to fight their way northward, but at the same time the Verne column reached and passed Sogag, entirely cutting off their retreat. The Frusci column gained Seik Hosk, where it halted waiting for bridges to be thrown across, and the Agostini column on the right wing occupied Kurati.

At this point the second phase of the manœuvre opened with the concentric attack of the three columns against the fortified system of Sassabaneh. On the afternoon of April 23rd, the 'Verne' column, on the left wing, took Dagamedo by a surprise attack, threatening the right flank of the enemy lines. At dawn on the 24th, the Italian positions at Dagamedo were attacked by large mechanized forces, coming from Dagabur, but after very fierce fighting they were completely routed.

In the centre, the Frusci column, reinforced by detachments from the 'Tevere' Division (composed of battalions of Italian volunteers living abroad and the 'Curtatone e Montanara' University battalion) after a rapid converging march, attacked at dawn on the 24th the well fortified Hamanlei positions. At the end of two days' fierce fighting, on April 25th, Hamanlei was occupied and the Abyssinians, after repeated bayonet charges, were dislodged from the caves, defeated and scattered. On the right wing, the Agostini column attacked and occupied on the morning of the 24th the strong Gunagado position, driving out the enemy forces who helped by the broken nature of the ground, resisted bravely. Mechanized detachments then advanced to Bullalè.

Having completed between the 26th and 28th the

reorganization of his forces and the co-ordination of the positions conquered, General Graziani gave orders on April 28th for the decisive attack of the fortified line, Sassabaneh-Bullalè-Dagabur. This was completely successful, the enemy retreating in disorder along the caravan route of Jig-Jiga after the loss of another 5,000 men and a great deal of war material.

Italian casualties between April 14th and 30th were 50 officers and 1,800 men killed and wounded.

The decisive factors in the victorious conclusion of the battle of Ogaden were the untiring activity of the Engineer bridge-building sections, who undaunted by the fierce storms of wind and rain, accomplished remarkable work in throwing road and foot-bridges across the flooded rivers; and secondly, the support of the Italian Air Force which, during the seventeen days of battle, made 760 flights, 24 machines being hit. In the course of the operations they further effected the transport by air of more than 1,000 tons of stores from Mogadishu to Gorrhei, over a distance of about 700 miles.

Chapter Twelve

THE CAPTURE OF DESSIÈ AND THE MARCH ON ADDIS ABABA

Marshal Badoglio was determined to take the fullest advantage of the victory of Lake Ashangi and on April 5th, while aircraft and the Azebo Galla Bands were harrying the flying remnants of the Abyssinian army, the Marshal issued orders for the preparation of a further advance. The Native Army Corps was to march on Dessiè and sweeping aside any resistance, was to occupy the town by April 15th. The I Army Corps reinforced by fresh units from other sectors, was to remain in position between Mai Chio and Quoram, and to continue the building of roads which had been interrupted during the battle. Meanwhile the Engineers were to proceed with the heavy task of improving the roads to the rear of Mai Chio, and the supplies services were to bring up stores and establish new depots. On April 6th the Marshal summoned the General commanding the Army Service Corps and the General commanding the Engineers to his headquarters in order to explain to them his plans for the march on the Abyssinian capital of a strong mechanized column. He had already envisaged such a possibility during the Shirè battle and on April 8th had communicated his ideas to his senior officers.

The Marshal believed that his scheme was feasible, despite the immense number of lorries which would be needed and the bad state of the roads over which the advance would have to be made. When the Council of War broke up, orders were issued that 1,300 lorries were to be collected. The motor-column was to concentrate at Dessiè between April 20th and 22nd and was to leave that place between April 23rd and 25th and to arrive in Addis Ababa about April 30th.

The Situation in the other Sectors.

While these dispositions were being made by the Italian High Command, measures were at the same time being taken for a preliminary military and political settlement in the vast region south of the Takazzè. A civilian political officer was appointed, while the three military districts of Wolkait, Semien, and Gondar were under the direct control of Marshal Badoglio. The friendly relations with the natives which had been established during the Italian advance beyond the Takazzè and the Setit Rivers were strengthened by numerous submissions of chiefs and sub-chiefs. Arms were surrendered, the markets were reopened, and the population showed its relief at the ending of the anarchy which had prevailed in the province. Meanwhile Ras Immiru continued his retreat towards Gojjam, which was then in revolt, the rebels welcoming the Italians as friends.

While some of the units were engaged on the construction of the roads so necessary to their existence, others were pushing on rapidly. Gadabi was occu-

pied on April 6th, and Gallabat on the 12th, thereby securing Italian control in that zone of the Anglo-Sudanese frontier. On the same day the advance guard reached the Gorgora peninsula, within sight of Lake Tana, and Tzekede on the 17th. On the 23rd the Italians were at Bahr-Dar at the southern extremity of the Lake, which thus came entirely under their control. Debra Tabor, the chief centre of the Begemeder region and Headquarters of Ras Kassa, fell into their hands on the 28th.

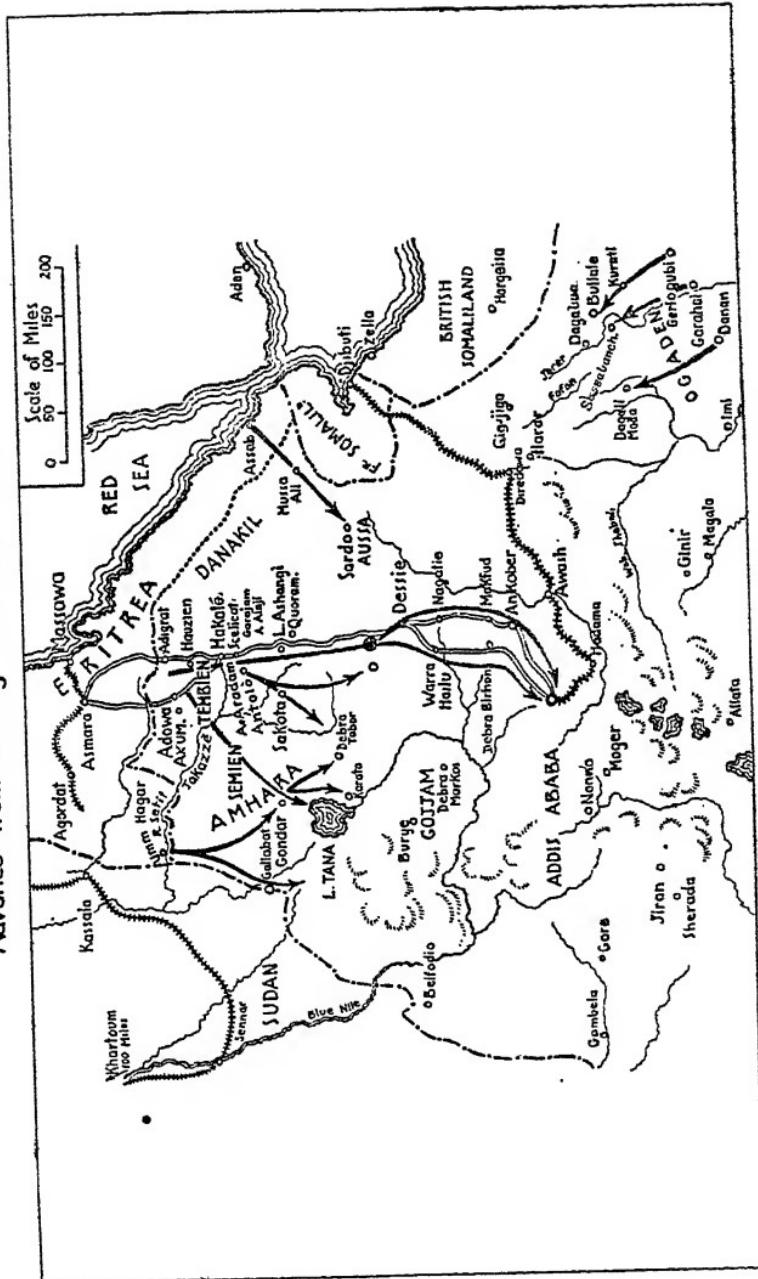
On April 26th the Sultan Mohamed Yaho presented himself to the Officer commanding the Italian forces and made his submission, thus putting an end to operations in the Aussa.

The other Army Corps rapidly completed the re-organization of their sectors and arranged for giving assistance to the native populations. Men, women, and children crowded the temporary hospitals opened for their benefit by the Army Medical Corps. New roads were made and old ones improved; depots were established by the supply services; thousands of natives swore allegiance and, provided with rifles, played a useful part in helping to police the country.

The Capture of Dessiè.

On April 9th, five days after the conclusion of the Battle of Lake Ashangi, the Native Army Corps (18,000 men and 9,000 pack animals) began its march to Dessiè, preceded and flanked by the Azebo Bands. The native population came out to greet the troops, accompanying them for long distances with music

Advance from Arhangi to Addis Ababa



and dances. The column lived principally on rations dropped from aeroplanes, but also on food bought from the inhabitants. Large stores of food-stuffs, cattle, and war material which had been abandoned by the enemy were secured. The rough path led over a wild and mountainous country, but the Army Corps covered the 220 miles in seven days. On April 14th the Native Cavalry patrols came within sight of Dessiè, and the Crown Prince with a few followers beat a hasty retreat. On the following day General Pirzio Biroli rode in at the head of the column and the Italian flag was hoisted over the Consulate and the "Ghebi" of Ras Micael. At the same time the first aeroplanes landed on the aerodrome.

During the progress of these operations an event took place that calls for special mention—the mass flight of Italian aeroplanes over Addis Ababa on April 13th. Thirteen bombing planes started from the Shafat camp near Makalè and were joined *en route*, above Dessiè, by nine raiding machines from Sardo. This imposing air formation, arriving over Addis Ababa about 10.40 a.m., made several flights over the Ethiopian capital without being attacked. Instead of bombs, thousands of little leaflets, enumerating the battles the Italians had won and the regions they had occupied, were dropped on the astonished population. This flight of over 800 miles was carried out with complete success in seven hours.

While the Native Army Corps was marching rapidly from Quoram to Dessiè, Italian troops were busily engaged in making a motor road from Enda

Cocos Atzala to Quoram, the staff were requisitioning 1,300 motor lorries in Asmara and despatching them to the front, and the supply services hurrying forward the necessary stores.

This meant that tens of thousands of tons had to be transported as quickly as possible across very difficult country. They were carried by every available means, mules, camels 'auto-carretti'¹ and aeroplanes. Enormous quantities were sent by air, while wheeled transport was divided into three main stages: first, heavy motor lorries; second, light motor lorries, and third, 'auto-carretti'. The last, to avoid breakdowns *en route*, were conveyed by lorries as far as these could force their way, then were unloaded from the lorries and in their turn loaded with supplies and proceeded as far as possible, till they too were held up by the broken ground. At this point, recourse was had to pack animals.

Along the 60 miles that separate Enda Korkos Atzala from Quoram men of all units and all branches of the Army including even doctors and hospital orderlies, were working with the utmost enthusiasm, day and night under violent and persistent rain, to open up the road, making light of the obstacles presented by the precipitous mountain sides. On April 17th, the road was finished and the mechanized column, which had meanwhile been concentrated near Enda Korkos where a supply depot had also been established, immediately began to move. The advance along this newly built road was beset with

¹ Note.—'Auto-carretti' are very light lorries with solid tyres and a four-wheel drive, specially constructed for mountain warfare.

difficulties no less severe than those tackled by the road builders. None the less all obstacles were overcome, and on April 18th the lorries began to pour into Quoram where the 'Sabauda' Division and other troops were making ready to form the long mechanized column.

On April 21st the mechanized column started, arriving at Dessiè between April 21st and 25th, and by April 24th a large new Supply Base was established at Quoram.

The full extent of the rout of the enemy was meanwhile becoming more and more apparent. While the Italians were pushing forward to reap the fruits of victory, the Negus with the few soldiers who remained faithful to him after the battle of Lake Ashangi, had wearily reached the Lalibela Convent, whence he set out again on April 17th for an unknown destination, pursued by the Azebo Galla Bands and the insurgent population. The Crown Prince who had fled from Dessiè on the night of April 14th, wandered about the country, and he too had to defend himself against the hostility of the people.

During their march on April 18th the Italians encountered a body of about 1,500 Abyssinians, probably the remnant of the Emperor's army which was easily dispersed and then pursued by aircraft. The natives welcomed the Italians with undisguised relief and returned to their fields and their markets.

The Transfer of the General Staff.

On April 20th Marshal Badoglio transferred his headquarters by air to Dessiè, where he was received

with pleasure by the population both of the town and the surrounding country. During the following days Chiefs and their followers flocked to his headquarters to make their submission, declaring that as the dynasty had fallen, it had no further claim on their allegiance; they were as unanimous in their acceptance of the Italian rule as in their joy at being finally freed from the yoke of the former Emperor.

The weather, which had greatly hampered the Italian advance, now improved. On April 23rd Marshal Badoglio personally assumed the command of the troops which were to occupy the Ethiopian capital. He considered it wise to enter Addis Ababa with a large force, despite the fact that all reports pointed to the collapse of the Empire, the exhaustion of its powers of resistance and the likelihood of an unmolested march to that city. His object was to maintain to the last moment the demonstration of Italian strength, and to arrive in the capital with an army which would demonstrate the futility of further resistance.

The Advance on the Capital.

The advance was made in three columns. The mechanized column consisted of the 'Sabauda' Division with a battalion of Blackshirts of the '3rd January' Division, the II Native Brigade, batteries of mechanized artillery of small and medium calibre, and detachments of Engineers. This proceeded along the Macfud-Debra Brehan 'Imperial Road', a distance of about 300 miles. The second column was composed of the 1st Native Brigade, squadrons of

Native cavalry and mountain batteries, and marched by the Worra Ilu-Legheddi route, a distance of about 250 miles. The third was similar in composition and followed the route of the mechanized column. The total strength of these three columns was 10,000 Italians, 10,000 Natives, eleven batteries, one squadron of light tanks and 1,600 lorries. At the start, the infantry formations were to precede the mechanized column, which was to pass them at a later stage, arriving on May 1st at Addis Ababa, where the former were to join it between May 4th and 5th.

Marshal Badoglio believed that if any attempt at resistance were to be made, this was likely to occur on the line Doba-Sella Mingai-Debra Sina; he therefore ordered a concentration of the three columns on this frontage. The march was begun by the Native battalions on April 24th; by the 1st Native Brigade on the 25th, and by the mechanized column on the 26th.

Owing to the bad condition of the road, the mechanized column at once encountered difficulties, which were overcome thanks to the Herculean efforts of the vanguard, of which the Engineers formed part. They levelled the surface of the road, built bridges, and made fords and long stretches of marshy ground practicable for lorries. On April 28th, the Native Brigade occupied Doba, and on the 30th the 'Sabauda' column arrived at Debra followed by the Native battalions. The terrain provided easily defensible positions, but the Abyssinians failed to make their last improbable, but still possible, stand.

The I Native Brigade pushed on, covering some 30 miles a day, a pace only possible for well trained and well led Native forces. The 'Sabauda' column, on the other hand, was incessantly delayed. The so-called 'Imperial Road' was in fact a wretched path. 'If in the mind of the Negus'—sardonically commented Marshal Badoglio—it represented civilization, I can only say that, viewing it charitably, it was a proof of the puerility of his ideas of civilization.' This path was the chief means of communication between the capital of the Empire and one of its most important centres, 300 miles away. Bridges were non-existent, or consisted only of tree trunks thrown across chasms; it crossed rivers which flowed between deep banks or lost themselves in bogs; there were no escarpments and the track climbed precipitous mountain sides and high passes such as the Termaber, over 8,000 feet above sea level. What road there was had been virtually destroyed, partly by the Abyssinians and partly by the heavy rains.

The column was constantly compelled to halt to make the necessary repairs. The worst stretch was close to the Termaber Pass; there, under pelting rain, companies of Italian and Native Engineers laboured for 36 hours to construct an escarpment 80 feet high and as many long, and to remove about 8,000 cubic feet of earth. They worked under the most adverse conditions, clinging to the steep mountain side or suspended by ropes where there was no foothold. The mechanized column was eventually able to creep slowly on, the soldiers

pushing the lorries up the steepest slopes, but it took almost two days to cross the pass. In the early hours of the morning of May 4th, all the lorries had reached the southern slopes of the Termaber Hill and the advance continued, still hampered by incessant rain. On the evening of the same day, the 1st Native Brigade and the vanguard arrived within sight of Addis Ababa which, abandoned by the Negus, was being looted and burnt.

Marshal Badoglio at Addis Ababa.

On May 5th the Marshal gave orders for all the columns to hasten their pace, and catching up with the vanguard, he entered Addis Ababa at 4 p.m. at the head of his troops. A few hours later all its principal points were occupied and patrols of Carabinieri, Infantry, and light tanks promptly restored order.

Marshal Badoglio paid a great tribute to the achievements of his Army:—‘I have constantly followed the troops, seeing with my own eyes the work performed by all ranks in order that this huge army of one thousand six hundred heavy motor vehicles, struggling along an unknown track, should attain its goal. This march, which has no precedent in military history, was regarded as a foolhardy and impossible enterprise. It was carried out with such speed and precision, despite all difficulties of the ground and the persistent bad weather, that it should go down to history as the March of Men with Wills of Iron.

‘Seven months after crossing the Mareb, less than

three months after the first great battle of Endertà, stage by stage and each one marked by fresh victories, which are known by the names of the Battle of Tembien, the Battle of Shirè, and the Battle of Lake Ashangi, my victorious troops have destroyed the Ethiopian Army and occupied the capital of the Empire.'

Chapter Thirteen

LAST OPERATIONS ON THE SOUTHERN FRONT : SOME GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF THE CAMPAIGN

The occupation of Dagabur, which took place on April 30th, brought about the fall of the Sosa Sobneh-Bullalè-Dagabur fortified system and the rout of Dejasmack Nasibu's army, which retreated along the Jig-Jiga caravan route. Although the rivers were in flood as a result of persistent bad weather, the mechanized columns pushed on in pursuit, while the remaining troops were concentrated on the conquered positions, ready to resume the advance at the earliest possible moment. A number of Chiefs in the Upper Ogaden made acts of submission to the Italian Authoritics and offered the co-operation of their followers against the Abyssinians.

Although the torrential rains rendered the ground almost unpassable, the mechanized column came up with a strong Abyssinian force on the afternoon of May 3rd about 60 miles north of Dagabur. The enemy fled after a fierce engagement during which the Commandant was wounded ; this was the notorious Omar Samanter, who had been responsible for the murder of Captain Carolei, in an ambush of an Italian garrison in Somalia in 1925.

On the morning of May 5th the Engineers—who

had already distinguished themselves by their untiring efforts during the seventeen days of the Ogaden battle—rapidly flung a bridge over 60 feet long and weighing 26 tons, across the flooded Gerrer. This was the sixteenth bridge which had been constructed since the beginning of operations in Ogaden. The mechanized column was thus able to resume its advance towards the last objectives and come up with the enemy rear-guard. After a march of about 120 miles General Graziani's troops occupied Jig-Jiga on the same evening only a few hours after the triumphal entry of Marshal Badoglio's troops into the Ethiopian capital.

Guns, machine guns, rifles, lorries, stores of food and munitions were captured in Jig-Jiga which is an important caravan junction, commanding the communications between the heart of Ethiopia and British Somaliland. Detachments of Dubats were at once sent forward to occupy the Marda Pass on the Jig-Jiga-Harar road while mechanized troops closely followed by the 'Libya' Division, marched along the Farso motor road to Harar. The resistance of the enemy on the southern front had completely collapsed.

Junction of the Two Fronts and End of the Campaign.

By the afternoon of May 5th, military operations proper may be considered to have ended with the simultaneous occupation of Addis Ababa on the northern and Jig-Jiga on the southern front. The campaign which opened on Oct. 3rd with the crossing of the Mareb had been brought to a victori-

ous conclusion. All that remained to be accomplished was the occupation of the political and military centre of Harar, the final objective of General Graziani's army, and of the important strategic junction of Diredawa, which commands the Gibuti-Addis Ababa railway. Accordingly the column commanded by General Nasi made a forced march and on the evening of May 8th entered Harar, promptly restoring order in the town which for three days had been given over to pillage. Thirty-five planes belonging to the Somalia aviation, under the direct command of General Ranza, circled in the sky above the city, while General Nasi's troops were taking possession.

A mechanized column, consisting of troops of the 'Tevere' Division (Italian volunteers resident abroad and University students) commanded by General Navarra, pursued its march on Diredawa reaching there in the early hours of the following day May 9th and were given a warm welcome by the French residents and the natives. Some artillery, a considerable number of rifles and machine guns and large quantities of petrol, coffee and grain were captured.

An impressive incident took place at noon on May 9th, when a battalion of the 46th Infantry Regiment arrived from Addis Ababa at Diredawa and was received there with military honours by a battalion of the 221st Legion of 'Fascists Abroad'. The junction of the two fronts was an accomplished fact, Somalia and Eritrea had been linked together by the conquest of Abyssinia.

In the course of seven months, this great undertaking—a decisive event in Italian history and by no means unimportant in world history—was brought to a victorious conclusion.

Upsetting all the prophecies of the most eminent European military critics, the Italian forces had overcome the obstacles presented by climate and the country; they had defeated and wiped out one after the other, seven enemy armies, most of which had been trained by Europeans and equipped with up-to-date arms and this had been achieved in the interval between two rainy seasons. The spirit of the people, the energy of the Government, strategic ability of military leaders, the technical training of the forces and the indomitable courage of officers and men, were the essential factors in this rapid, overwhelming and decisive victory.

Some General Observations on the Conduct of the Campaign

It is impossible to enter into a critical examination, however summary, of this brief and arduous campaign. Such an examination at so short a distance from its conclusion would be to say the least, premature, and in any case it could not fail to be inadequate and incomplete. Any review must be confined to the consideration of the planning and execution, which will provide material for study to experts and students of military problems. For the sake of clearness, it is proposed to group these brief remarks under four heads : the plan of campaign, strategy, tactics, and supply.

i. *Plan of Campaign.*—The main lines of the plan

of campaign were laid down by the Head of the Government so that the strength of the forces employed should be commensurate to the end in view. He decided to mobilize, side by side with the Colonial forces, complete divisions of white troops, which is without precedent in colonial campaigns. The Italians who had more than once made effective use of white troops in Africa, confined themselves in the 1895-6 campaign, to organizing battalions out of companies and regiments out of battalions, drawn from various corps ; in the Libyan campaign of 1911-12 brigades and divisions had, however, been composed of individual regiments. The use of entire divisions for a Colonial campaign proved to be of great value both in the moral and tactical sphere. The names of 'Peloritana', 'Gavinana,' 'Sabauda' and of the other regular units are now indissolubly linked with the military achievements of the African campaign, as well as those of the '28th October', '23rd March', and '3rd January', and other Blackshirt Divisions.

It may be remarked, *en passant*, that when the campaign was decided upon, no Blackshirt Divisions were in existence nor had their organization ever been envisaged. The innovation—due to Signor Mussolini himself—was severely criticized by the military experts of the foreign press. It certainly proved a success : it not only gave the regular Army and the Blackshirts the opportunity of fighting side by side, but it renewed, on the rugged *ambe* and along the rivers of reconquered Africa, the glorious traditions of the Italian volunteers.

White and native divisions, army corps, army troops, and supply services, formed an army which, for strength of effectives and quantity of supplies, far exceeded any previous colonial expeditionary force.

2. *Strategy*.—The first and essential point that strikes anyone studying the strategic conduct of this campaign is the success of the unity of command. The differences and misunderstandings that prevailed between politicians and military commanders during the Great War are now known and deplored. These differences and misunderstandings greatly hampered, or indeed precluded, unity of command, thus inevitably prolonging the conflict. The political control and strategic direction of the East African War were both in the hands of Signor Mussolini who was Head of the Government and Minister for War. This fact has entirely solved in Italy to-day a grave and long-standing problem, the discussion of which still continues in other countries.

The words used by King Victor Emmanuel when conferring on Signor Mussolini the insignia of the Knight of the Grand Cross of the Military Order of Savoy—the highest decoration for a General—were a recognition of the part which he had played in the preparation, organization, and conduct of the African campaign. The High Command carried out his instructions and the development of strategy into tactics led to the conquest of a numerous, well-armed enemy experienced in war, despite immense difficulties of climate, terrain and communications.

A second consideration of a tactical order deserv-

ing careful study is that the Italian forces have conducted a campaign in Africa which was 'colonial' only in name and in geo-topographical conditions. Taking into account the size of the armies engaged, their resources in arms and equipment, and the striking developments of modern methods in the use of aircraft and mechanized units, the campaign has been correctly described as 'a colonial war of European proportions'.

The mass employment of aircraft for strategic purposes in reconnaissances over wide radii and the effective bombardment of important distant objectives, such as military centres, supply depots, mobilization areas, headquarters, etc., made it possible to achieve effective aero-territorial co-operation. The extensive use of mechanized forces—armoured cars, light tanks, mechanized artillery and lorries for the transport of troops—made it possible to advance with a rapidity never attained even on European battlefields and to conduct an offensive war in a roadless, mountainous country, whose forbidding heights resemble those of the Alps.

The importance of this discovery (the employment of mechanized means of warfare) may well give rise to the consideration as to whether it is not advisable to modify current views as to the limitations imposed by natural conditions on the mechanization of armies.

The new Italian theory that an offensive war should be conducted with mingled daring and caution has been fully tested and justified in the recent African campaign. The whole action of the

High Command was marked by the blending of audacity and foresight. Unmoved by the criticisms of a portion of the foreign press, which declared that the Italian expeditionary corps was worn out, the High Command knew how to wait (in war it is often more difficult to wait than to act). As soon as it had collected on the spot the forces and supplies needed for an advance, it attacked the enemy and defeated him, on each occasion preparing the way for further strategic action. The tactics adopted in accordance with the strategical plan led from one success to another : from Endertà to Shirè, from Lake Ashangi to Addis Ababa, from Gorrahei to Neghelli, from Janagobo to Dagabur.

One last consideration suggests itself : throughout this campaign, the High Command resolutely and consistently observed the fundamental principle that the first aim in war is to defeat the enemy, rather than to occupy his territory—a principle which has frequently been departed from in colonial warfare. During the first months of the campaign the hostile armies continually endeavoured to avoid coming to grips, but the strategy and tactics of the Italian Command compelled them to accept battle under the most disadvantageous conditions both as to time and terrain. It was with this aim that the Tigrè manœuvre was prepared and carried out; it resulted in a complete change in the strategic situation on the northern front and opened the road to victory through the tactical phases of the Endertà, Tembien, and Shirè.

3. *Tactics.*—When the moment arrived, the

tactical execution was of lightning rapidity, overwhelming and giving no respite to the enemy until his strength was completely exhausted. Continuity and intensity of action, completed by repeated pincer-like manœuvres, enabled the Italians to gather the fruits of victory and to follow up their successes in a way which had not been foreseen. Thus on both fronts, but more especially on the northern, the successive battles upset all the enemy's plans and accelerated the pace of his downfall.

The following were essential factors on these tactics: the co-ordinating action of the various commands, the close co-operation of the operating troops and the liaison between the air and land forces. Aircraft played a most effective, and often a decisive part, especially in the tactical field.

The mass intervention of aircraft, before, during and after battle, has been widely and successfully tried in this campaign, completing the action of the artillery in preparatory phases and in support, entirely replacing the infantry in following up successes and in the pursuit of the enemy.

But a new tactical use of the air arm—which had not, and could not have been, foreseen—was developed during this campaign; that was its use for the protection of troops on the march or halted. Its value was particularly shown during the difficult march of one of the columns despatched from Assab across the Dankalia desert to Sardo in the heart of Aussa.

4. *Supply Services.*—If the strategical and tactical conduct of the campaign provides much of interest

for military experts, the solution of the supply problem—some aspects of which have already been dealt with—has been a remarkable achievement.

As soon as it was decided to undertake the campaign, it became necessary to transport and land in Eritrea and Somalia some hundreds of thousands of men, besides an immense quantity of munitions and equipment of all kinds, despite the inadequate landing facilities at Massawa and the almost insuperable difficulties at the harbours on the Indian Ocean. The first efforts of the supply services were concentrated on improving the ports. This was only part of the work which had to be undertaken since communications between the ports and the hinterland were lacking. So work was immediately started for the construction of motor roads for heavy traffic from Massawa to Asmara in Eritrea, and from Mogadishu to Gherlogubi in Somalia, roads which had eventually to be extended from Asmara to Addis Ababa and from Gherlogubi to Gorrahei.

The execution of these complex and pressing tasks was entrusted to Italian volunteer workers organized in gangs of one hundred men under the direction of civil engineers and Engineer officers. About 70,000 men were enrolled and formed as it were a civilian army which followed in the immediate rear of the troops. This army which also suffered casualties as the result of the climate and of surprise attacks by the enemy, was one of the decisive factors in the achievement of victory.

Men and materials having been landed and con-

veyed to the bases of operations, the problem arose of feeding and maintaining on a war-footing several hundreds of thousands of men, operating at distances of from 3,000 to 4,000 miles from Italy, and not less than 300 to 600 miles from the bases on the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean, in a mountainous country almost completely lacking in water and resources. As the troops advanced, it became necessary to move forward the supply depots and to convert bridle paths into roads for heavy traffic. All means of transport, heavy lorries, 'auto-carretti', mules, camels, porters and aeroplanes had to be used. In this field throughout the whole of this campaign the Air Force proved its value as a powerful auxiliary to land transport, replacing it altogether at points where natural obstacles made progress impossible. The partial replenishing by air of the III Army Corps during the change in the lines of communication in the second Battle of Tembien, was soon surpassed by the aerial supply of food, munitions and water to the troops of the IV Army Corps during the Battle of Shirè. But both these efforts were eclipsed by the aerial supply of the column marching on Sardo across an almost unexplored desert where the torrid heat prevented the transport of meat. This made it necessary for the escorting aeroplanes to carry daily supplies of living sheep and cattle.

When the whole story of the work of the supply services of the Italian Army during the recent campaign is available, a new and valuable field of study will be opened to students. It will be possible to

estimate the magnitude and complexity of the organization needed in a colonial campaign, conducted by large armies and modern methods in a mountainous region, without roads or resources.

But the brilliance of the plan of campaign, the organization of the supply services, the strategic wisdom of the Commander-in-Chief and his Generals, the technical ability of officers and men, could not of themselves have achieved success, if soldiers and civilians alike had not been animated by a spirit which welded them into a united whole.

'This achievement has been possible'—to use the words of Marshal Badoglio—'because every soldier's heart beat with love for Italy; because each soldier felt proud of being Italian and was conscious of the greatness of the enterprise in which his country was engaged; because from these sentiments he derived strength to face any fatigue and to overcome all obstacles.'

Chapter Fourteen

THE WORK OF THE NAVY DURING THE CAMPAIGN IN EAST AFRICA

A colonial war does not necessarily imply naval operations, but during the campaign in East Africa the Italian Navy was called upon to face great and far reaching problems. It had to provide transports, increase the capacity of the ports at Massawa and Mogadishu to handle the vast quantities of men and supplies, to organize medical services, to put the Italian East Africa Colonies in a state of defence in view of the possibility of international complications and finally it had to organize wireless communications both within the colonies themselves and with Italy.

Naval Bases of Operation

The size of the forces employed, which has no precedent in the history of colonial warfare, the distance separating the theatre of operations from the mother-country (Naples to Massawa 2,100 miles, Naples to Mogadishu 3,700 miles), the climate, the geographical and strategical position, the nature of the country, and the absence of any local resources, made it essential that the ports should be large, safe, well equipped, and provided with storehouses, jetties, and means of unloading. At the beginning of 1935 none of these existed ; on the whole Eritrean and Somalia coasts the only harbours which could be utilized were Massawa and Mogadishu, but neither was provided with the facilities to carry out the work entailed by the expedition.

Massawa was a small seaside town of 3,000 inhabitants on a seashore which, with the exception of the Persian Gulf, is the hottest in the world. The absence of fresh water supplies and the trying climate made it very difficult, if not impossible, for Europeans to live there and seemed to preclude any development of the town. The traffic of the port was limited to the Italian packet-boats, a few British tramps, some Japanese steamers loading salt for India, and some hundred native craft called 'sambuchi'. The average monthly traffic was approximately 2,000 tons and as the jetties, the mechanical means of loading and unloading, rail lines, storage, etc.—in fact all that goes to make the equipment of a port—were in proportion, the unloading operations were often very complicated and always very slow. This port was suddenly called upon to deal with a colossal amount of work at an ever increasing pace.

The monthly traffic of 2,000 tons became in the first place 25,000 tons and soon rose to more than 60,000 tons. Instead of a rare passenger, entire Divisions had to be disembarked rapidly in order that the troops should remain the least possible time in the heat of Massawa. It seemed that only by a miracle could such difficulties and obstacles be overcome, but the Italian Navy with its experience of handling the same type of work during the War in Libya, the rescuing of the Serbian Army, and the operations in Albania and Macedonia, was well equipped for the task.

The first great obstacle was the inadequate accom-

modation at Massawa; as it was out of the question to construct a new port, the only course was to try and enlarge the existing one. This had to be done without in any way interfering with the ever-increasing rush of work. Some wharves were lengthened, new jetties were erected, basins were dredged in order to make them accessible to large steamers, new subsidiary wharves were erected in neighbouring bays, railway lines were laid down, large areas were cleared, big warehouses erected, and a complete system of railway lines connecting the warehouses with the wharves was laid down. At the same time a great number of tugs, lighters, floats, etc., of all kinds and of all sizes were despatched from Italy, together with the two ships—the *Sesia* and the *Garigliano*—specially built for the disembarking of troops. The transport of all these craft was not an easy task. Those weighing less than 40 tons could be loaded in steamers, but all the others had to be taken in tow with all the risks of a long voyage and variable weather conditions.

The following figures will give an idea of the work involved.

During 1935 the following material was sent out to Eritrea—134 large rafts, 24 specially constructed landing stages, 8 tugs, 14 steamboats, 17 motor-boats, 3 fire floats, 2 motor-tankers, 3 bulks fitted with sheers, 1 hulk fitted with machinery for the production of electric power, and 48 lighters. In the same year 2 tugs, 7 lighters, and many rafts, motor-boats, steamboats, etc., were sent out to Somalia.

Fresh difficulties were created by the lack of

local labour, largely due to the laws prohibiting emigration from Egypt, Sudan, and other countries under British dominion. This slowed down the discharging of cargoes, so that the steamers were often obliged to lie at anchor for a long time in the bay. The insufficiency of transport ashore made it hard to clear the wharves even of perishable stores. At one moment in particular it seemed as if the difficulties were insurmountable, but the Navy persevered. Little by little, learning from experience, improving and improvising, the 80 tons which had represented the maximum daily unloading capacity, rose to almost 2,500 tons. At the same time the harbour was enlarged to accommodate 50 ships instead of four or five.

In May, 1935—before the Navy took over the organization of the port of Massawa—with an average of eighteen ships in the harbour it took about six days to unload troopships, and eighteen days those carrying cattle and stores; by the end of August—although the number of ships had increased to about fifty daily—the average for troopships had been reduced to one or two days, and for cargo-boats to approximately seven days.

The position at Mogadishu was even worse and the obstacles to be overcome were even greater. At Massawa a harbour existed, although it was small and badly equipped; at Mogadishu there was no harbour. Ships calling there had to anchor in the open bay which is swept by the monsoon, so that even with good weather, it was difficult to unload more than about 10 tons of merchandise per day. To give an idea of

the work carried out by the Navy at Mogadishu it is sufficient to say that now it is possible to unload about 2,000 tons of stores per day. The average time for unloading has fallen from the very high initial figures to about ten days for troopships and twenty for cargo-boats, although the number of ships daily at anchor has risen from ten to twenty-five.

During the same period the Navy also organized and equipped the bases of Bender Kassim, Alula, Dante, Obbia, Merca and Brava, where altogether another 500 tons of materials can be discharged per day.

In addition to the reorganization of the port at Massawa many other urgent problems had to be faced, the most important and the most difficult being that of an adequate supply of water. Wells were sunk, the sub-soil resources tapped and piped, and eventually a plant was set up capable of a daily production of 7,500 tons of water. When the first troops landed the water-supply was barely sufficient for the native population. It is easy to imagine the suffering which this lack of water as well as the lack of ice and of medical aid, caused the workmen sent out from Italy. It was comparatively easy to remedy the lack of ice and of medical aid by sending out the two ships *Serdica* and *Asmara* equipped with refrigerating machinery and by pushing forward the preparation of a number of hospital ships. The first of these was the *Urania* which was refitted in an incredibly short time, and its presence at Massawa was of great value to the workmen.

It was more difficult to solve the problem of water, especially as it was necessary to provide an adequate water supply not only for Massawa but also for Mogadishu and the subsidiary bases of Bender Kassim, Alula, Chisimaio, Obbia, etc. The first and most important step was that of sending the *Città di Siracusa* fitted with distilling machinery to Massawa, and of concentrating all available water tank ships, viz. *Dalmazia*, *Sesia*, *Istria*, *Garigliano*, *Sebeto*, *Anteo*, and many others—in the Red Sea. These tankers underwent a few slight alterations and had to change over, almost from one day to the next, from their ordinary work in the home ports to incessant hard work which put a great strain on both men and machinery. If the machinery sometimes failed, the men never did. They never had a day or an hour's rest ; their world was bounded by their ship and for months on end, under the blazing sun of the Red Sea, their one and only preoccupation was to maintain the efficiency of their ships so that there should be no interruption of their vital service.

Transport Organization

The work of organizing the transports was, of course, simpler than that of organizing and equipping the naval bases, nevertheless the solution of this problem was not easy. In view of the progressive fall in emigration due to legislative action in various countries, the merchant navies throughout the world—and the Italian one in particular—had had to divert their activities to the transport of cabin

passengers. Consequently, the reserve of steamers suitable to the transport of troops was small and made it imperative to hurry through the alteration of modern ships to prepare them for this special work.

In the Italo-Ethiopian conflict the position was further complicated by the fact that the long sea journey, mostly through tropical zones, made it impossible to carry both the troops and their transport animals in the same ship, thus creating additional difficulties for the inter-organization of transports. This meant that for the alteration of chartered steamers the Navy had to prepare plans on a very large scale and the work both in the State Arsenals and in private dockyards had to be carried out as rapidly as possible. The merchant vessels were fitted with berths, wash-basins, shower-baths, ladders, lavatories and stables, etc.

At first, in order to cause the least possible disturbance in the regular traffic and to avoid the withdrawal of ships from the transatlantic lines, only a few vessels (which were laid up at the time) were chartered for the transport of troops. Later, as the number of troops increased, ships of the mercantile reserve fleet were utilized and eventually some of the large fast passenger ships. In the latter case, care was taken not to cause an appreciable reduction of tonnage and to choose the steamers in such a way that the owners could substitute others less suitable for the transport of the Expeditionary Force. It also became necessary to purchase abroad twelve steamers of a total tonnage of 140,000 tons.

The number of ships chartered from February,

1935 to February, 1936, amounted to 93, a total tonnage of 725,171, which figure, however, does not include 34 vessels chartered for the Air Force and 16 for special service with the Royal Navy.

The number of men, animals, and motor vehicles transported to East Africa each month went on steadily increasing from February, 1935 (5,890 men, 400 animals, and 82 motor vehicles) to September, 1935 (51,743 men, 2,166 animals, and 660 motor vehicles) with a slight reduction during the month of July owing to the rainy season. This represented a monthly average from February, 1935 to February, 1936 of 24,902 men, 1,603 animals, and 417 motor vehicles. These figures refer to chartered steamers only and do not include the transport of men, animals, motor vehicles, and other material by ships of the regular services.

Up to the end of April, 1936, 298,821 men, 19,233 animals, 5,000 motor vehicles, and 207,219 tons of material had been transported to East Africa by chartered steamers, in the proportion of five-sixths to Eritrea and one-sixth to Somalia.

In addition, 26,000 workmen were transported to East Africa and those who had completed their contract, were repatriated.

Taking into account further movements of troops by sea in order to relieve garrisons, etc., the total for one year amounted to 360,000 men, 30,000 animals, 6,500 motor vehicles, and 3,000,000 tons of stores.

A Naval officer was sent on board each of the chartered ships (a Captain or Commander for the larger transports, and a Lieutenant-Commander or

Lieutenant for the smaller ones) together with some naval ratings.

In Naples, the home base of the expedition, a Naval Transport Office was set up under the command of a Captain R.N. with a staff of Naval and Military officers, to deal with the embarkation of troops, the loading and re-fuelling, etc., of the transports. Similar offices were created in Messina, Genoa, Leghorn, and Cagliari, whilst at the Ministry of Marine in Rome a special office was created to deal with the administrative work connected with the expedition. Naval transport officers were appointed at Massawa and Mogadishu, and were attached to Army Headquarters at Merca, Brava, Kisimaio, Obbia, and other places.

Medical Organization

With the arrival of the first white troops in East Africa the Navy was faced by the problem of providing suitable hospital accommodation for cases of sickness caused by the climate, particularly at Massawa. The first measure taken was that of transforming a passenger ship into a floating hospital. The large saloon, large and small drawing-rooms, library, etc., were converted into operating theatres, dental surgery, bacteriological laboratory, etc., equipped with all the most modern medical fittings, apparatus, instruments, etc., while the holds were transformed into wards and rendered thoroughly hygienic. It was also necessary to rig up special means of hoisting the sick on board from the boats taking them alongside so as to avoid the risk of jarring them in rough

weather. Additional water tanks were fitted to bring the supply up to 2,000 tons, refrigerating machinery was installed, while the supply of medicines, bandages, linen, etc., enabled the hospital ship to keep the sea for six months with a full complement of patients.

Particular care was taken in choosing the medical personnel. In general, preference was given to personnel of the Royal Navy (active service and reserve) who had already served in the Colonies and were thus both physically and technically more suitable.

The first hospital ship, the *Urania*, reached Massawa at the end of April. The alterations and the medical organization proved satisfactory not only when lying in harbour, but also while at sea, when it was possible to carry out important operations, X-ray examinations, microscopic observations, etc., as in any ordinary large hospital.

In May, 1935, the Navy decided to equip a second hospital ship and for this purpose chose the steamer *Tevere*. As a result of the experience already gained during the brief period of service of the *Urania*, the alterations in the *Tevere* were carried out more quickly and easily and the final result was more satisfactory. In June the *Tevere* left Trieste for Massawa with accommodation for 600 patients, viz. slightly more than the *Urania*, which had 550 beds. The *Tevere* remained at Massawa from June 29th to Aug. 7th, i.e. forty days, carrying out the work of a floating hospital for the personnel of Army and Navy in that port, as well as for the

crews of warships and transports in port and in the bay.

The service of the *Tevere* at Massawa during the hottest months of the year proved that in spite of the precautions taken, in spite of the installation of thermotank, ventilators, etc., the temperature in the wards remained much too high, causing great discomfort to the patients and personnel. For these reasons the preparation of a third hospital ship—the *California*—was put in hand, and in this vessel a special plant was installed to keep the wards, operating theatres, laboratories, etc., at a maximum temperature of 60 to 70 degrees according to requirements. In this way, even during the torrid days of August and September when the temperature at Massawa reaches over 100 degrees and the heat is stifling on account of the moisture in the air, doctors found it possible to carry out important operations. The patients, who owing to their serious condition—either owing to illness or accidents—could not be moved were able to remain in bed without any discomfort, whereas without the special air-conditioning plant a prolonged stay in the wards would have been almost impossible and dangerous in view of the possibility of heat strokes.

The *California* served at Massawa uninterruptedly for two months, viz. from Aug. 15th to Oct. 15th. The work of the medical and nursing staff during this period can be gathered from the following figures: patients treated, 1,863; days of treatment 14,868; discharged as cured 1,048; repatriated 666; general operations 200. Among the patients treated

were an officer and two men of the British merchant service who had been sent ashore sick, when their ships called at Massawa.

It was, however, necessary to prepare for future eventualities and for this purpose two other liners—the *Helouan* and the *Vienna*—were fitted up as hospital ships. These comprised all the improvements dictated by the experience gained during the previous six months' service in East Africa and on completion represented the best that could be planned and carried out during this difficult period.

Before the end of the campaign there were eight hospital ships in East African waters, viz. *Urania*, *Tevere*, *California*, *Helouan*, *Vienna*, *Cesarea*, *Aquilea*, and *Gradisca*, with a total accommodation of 5,000–6,000 beds, and all the medical staff belonged to the Navy, with the exception of the 'V.A.D.s', of whom there were eight to ten in each ship. In Naples a special depot was set up to deal with all supplies for these ships.

In view of increased requirements in the East African Colonies it was also necessary to establish Naval hospitals ashore. At Massawa a new hospital with fifty beds was built and also a central depot for medical stores and in addition, the Navy organized a hospital of twenty-four beds for the dockyard workers. Similar measures were taken at Assab and a convalescence home, capable of accommodating twenty-five beds, was established at Asmara for the personnel of the Navy.

Six other temporary hospitals were established in localities both in Eritrea and Somalia where

medical assistance was required. All these are manned by personnel of the Navy.

Defence of the East African Colonies

The work of the Navy did not end with the organization and equipment of the ports of Massawa and Mogadishu, with medical assistance, and the organization of the transport service; it had also to take the necessary defensive measures. At the beginning of hostilities it was considered imperative to take some precautions to strengthen the naval base of Massawa and prepare it against all eventualities. The need was realized as far back as in 1885 when Massawa was first occupied, then again in 1896, during the Adowa campaign. It became of even greater importance in 1935 when the threat of international complications might have caused a serious menace to the Italian lines of communication on which the Expeditionary Force depended.

The idea of escorted convoys was rejected as this precaution was not considered necessary, would have delayed the transports and would have created fresh difficulties in the East African ports. It was therefore decided to increase the number of Naval units stationed in the ports on the route to East Africa and to strengthen the fleet in the Red Sea by sending to Massawa such warships—cruisers, destroyers, and submarines—as could be spared without diminishing the efficiency of the home fleet.

The increase in the number of men-of-war in East African waters made it necessary to improve the dockyards so that the shore services could

co-operate in maintaining the efficiency of the warships. At sea as well as on shore, strategy depends on the organization of the supply services and a fleet is valueless without a well equipped base able to satisfy the manifold requirements both of men and ships.

To create a naval base at Massawa at short notice was not easy. The small dockyard which was able to deal with the requirements of the gunboats normally stationed there for coastguard service and to carry supplies to lighthouses, was not adequate to the ever increasing demands made upon it. It was therefore necessary to build new storehouses, fuel-depots and to install plant for the production of electricity. At the same time a great many tugs and floats, a floating dock for the periodical docking of ships, and even targets for gun practice had to be sent from Italy. Workshops capable of dealing with the most important repairs and assisting in the general upkeep of the fleet, had to be provided. Simultaneously the organization of the defence of the base and of the important strategic points had to be carried out.

Soon all along the sun-baked open coast, in places devoid of all natural resources, seemingly insuperable obstacles were overcome ; guns of all calibres were landed, dragged up ravines and placed in position : piers, jetties, depots, and sheds were built, roads were cut through rocks, wells were sunk—in short a great defensive system was thoroughly organized. Even when this was completed, the strain on the officers and ratings continued.

The efficiency of a ship depends on too many elements to allow of any interruption or slackening of the routine, consequently the training of men must never stop and the warships—no matter where they are stationed—must carry out their exercises regularly.

It is easy to imagine what the conditions in the stifling atmosphere in the Red Sea must have been on board warships built for northern latitudes and in which it had not been possible to make the necessary alterations for service in the tropics. In the summer when the temperature reaches over 100 degrees in the shade and there is not a breath of air, when the awnings are no real protection against the sun and the sides become red-hot, the temperature between decks with the added heat from the engines, becomes almost unbearable. The moisture in the atmosphere in the Red Sea increases the danger of heat strokes, intense headaches, respiratory difficulties, etc. The sufferings of the crews of the submarines were even greater. During the slowly passing hours of submerged patrol, when all contact with the outside world is limited to the monotonous view of the sea at the periscope, the thermometer rises steadily, the air heavy with moisture becomes almost unbreathable, and the men are hardly able to move.

Wireless Services in East Africa

Ever since 1907 the Navy has been entrusted with the organization of wireless services in the East African Colonies and between the Colonies and Italy.

Originally this work was carried out by a few ratings stationed along the coast and frontiers of the Colonies, often living in sheds and always fighting against sickness and all kinds of technical difficulties. Gradually mechanized columns took the place of the slow caravans escorted by native troops, tracks were improved and wireless stations were installed everywhere. As Signor De Martino, the former Governor, justly remarked the pacification of Somalia was the natural consequence of the far-seeing policy of the Italian Government, of the bravery of the Colonial troops, and above all of the sound wireless telegraph connections established there by Naval experts. As an example of the value of their work it is interesting to remember that the call from Wal Wal for reinforcements to repel the sudden attack was sent out by one of these stations.

At the beginning of the Italo-Ethiopian conflict the Navy had thirty-four wireless telegraph stations in Eritrea and Somalia, all equipped with modern apparatus. In addition, there were two transcontinental stations at Mogadishu and Asmara, both with very powerful apparatus suitable for commercial purposes, with automatic transmission, and a great margin of capacity. In normal times the total traffic between the two Colonies and Rome—through the St. Paolo station—amounted to about 200,000 words a month.

The traffic increased enormously during the campaign and new measures had to be taken to ensure the rapid handling of messages. The number

of words transmitted rose from 342,949 words in January, 1935 to 1,929,524 words in December, 1935.

To deal with this enormous increase in communications, which does not include those sent in the latter months of the war by telephone, the following measures had to be taken :—

(a) Increasing the number of wireless telegraph stations to facilitate internal communications and creation of new wireless centres as the troops advanced.

(b) Increasing the number and power of wireless apparatus to facilitate the transmission of messages.

(c) Enlarging the wireless stations at Mogadishu and Asmara and installing wireless-telephones connecting them with Italy.

(d) Enlarging and increasing the power of the wireless apparatus at the St. Paolo Station in order to deal with the communications.

(e) Installation of a beam station at the three centres in order to obtain better receptivity without having to increase the transmitting which would have entailed heavier expense.

The later increases of power in wireless installations have been carried out so as to facilitate the sending of press messages. In addition journalists were granted facilities for the use of the transcontinental telephones up to a maximum time of three hours a day. On the days following military actions, in addition to messages sent by telephone, press telegrams increased by 40,000 words.

Another important service was that of messages

between soldiers and their families which averaged 3,000 telegrams a day, and the transmission of money orders which were sent almost exclusively by wireless.

In May, 1935, the Head of the Government ordered the installation of wireless-telephony and on Aug. 23rd the first conversation between Asmara and Rome took place. The plant and apparatus were made entirely in Italy and many of the instruments were devised by R.N. experts and constructed in the workshops of the Navy. Wireless-telephone service with Mogadishu was being installed at the end of the war.

In view of the great importance of all these services—including many which were not strictly speaking of a military nature—the Navy adapted the previously existing plant and made it adequate to deal with the increased work. Many specialists, both officers and men were detailed for this without in any way reducing the efficiency of ordinary wireless service of the Fleet and with other possessions in the Mediterranean. Large quantities of wireless stores, mostly from Naval depots, were despatched to East Africa.

At the end of the war the Navy had altogether fifty wireless stations in East Africa which, including internal communications, dealt with 6,000,000 words a month.

The Italian Navy can look back with legitimate pride and satisfaction to the efficiency and the spirit with which it met the many demands made upon it during the war in East Africa. Its duties were many and varied, often unforeseen and unfore-

seeable. On it rested the whole responsibility for the transport of an Expeditionary Force of over a quarter of a million men with its arms, baggage, munitions, and food. They had to be disembarked either at Massawa, where for many months the resources of the port were quite inadequate, or else at Mogadishu, an open roadstead exposed to the monsoon. The need for haste was so great that it was impossible to hold up the stream of traffic until the necessary improvements were made, and any breakdown in the organization might have resulted in the Army finding itself in a hostile country without adequate supplies of ammunition or food.

That the campaign was brought to so rapid a conclusion was largely due to the energy and resourcefulness shown by all ranks and ratings of the Navy.

APPENDIX

TOTAL ITALIAN CASUALTIES, JAN. 1ST, 1935- MAY 31ST, 1936

Regular Army and Blackshirts : 1,148 killed, 125
died from wounds, 31 missing.

Total : 2,313.

Workmen : 453.

Native troops : 1,593.

